Universidade de Lisboa

Faculdade de Letras

Programa em Estudos Comparatistas

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERPRETING DURING THE PORTUGUESE DISCOVERIES IN AFRICA AND ASIA

Garry Mullender

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Tese co-orientada pelas Professoras Doutoras Fernanda Gil Costa e Ivana Cenková, especialmente elaborada para a obtenção do grau de doutor em Estudos Comparatistas, Ramo de Tradução, Especialidade em História da Tradução

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THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERPRETING DURING THE PORTUGUESE DISCOVERIES IN AFRICA AND ASIA

ABSTRACT

During the Portuguese Discoveries, seafaring explorers came into contact with a plethora of different people; languages and cultures, with whom they wished to trade; create alliances and convert to the Christian faith. All of these processes required verbal interaction and hence linguistic mediators. We shall attempt to construct the history of linguistic mediation in these settings, within the broader context of the history of cultural encounters between Europeans and Africans and Asians between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. The aims of this study include understanding what the Portuguese considered linguistic mediation to be in these settings and how this influenced their opinion and evaluation of interpreters; identifying and tracing the characteristics of those who acted as interpreters and to what degree they corresponded to their clients' and employers' expectations. We shall pay particular attention to the relationship that the Portuguese had with these individuals, their level of trust in them and the question of loyalty and the different means used to ensure it.

Through the study of contemporary sources, such as chronicles and correspondence, we shall endeavour to gauge the importance that linguistic mediation held for expeditions and the various military; diplomatic and religious authorities, by analysing of recruitment methods, working conditions and the system of rewards and recognition. We shall carefully consider the range of activities that interpreters undertook, by examining their technical specificities and the relevant skills for performing them satisfactorily, in particular, the correlation between linguistic proficiency and the tasks in hand, and how this was interpreted, including the interpreters' views on their own work.

We shall consider the parameters used for assessing the quality of linguistic mediation, in addition to the initiatives undertaken to improve and guarantee it, as indicators of the importance that this function had for those involved in the Discoveries.

Keywords: *língua*, interpreting, Portuguese Discoveries, Portuguese India, Company of Jesus.

A IMPORTÂNCIA DA INTERPRETAÇÃO
NOS DESCOBRIMENTOS PORTUGUESES EM ÁFRICA E NA ÁSIA

RESUMO

Durante os Descobrimentos, os navegadores portugueses mantiveram contactos com diversos povos, línguas e culturas, com os quais quiseram desenvolver parcerias comerciais e militares e, se possível, convertê-los à fé cristã. Todos estes processos requeriam uma interação verbal e portanto, mediadores linguísticos. Tentaremos construir a história da mediação linguística nestes domínios, dentro do contexto mais amplo da história dos encontros culturais entre europeus, africanos e asiáticos entre os séculos quinze e dezassete. Compreender o âmbito da mediação linguística e como influenciou a opinião e a avaliação dos intérpretes pelos portugueses e até que ponto correspondiam às expectativas dos clientes e empregadores fazem parte dos objetivos deste estudo. Prestamos especial atenção à relação dos portugueses com estes individuos, a sua confiança neles e a questão da lealdade e os diferentes meios para assegurá-la.

Com base em fontes coevas, tais como as crónicas, a correspondência e outros documentos de arquivo, procuramos aferir a importância da mediação linguística para as viagens de descobrimento e as diferentes autoridades políticas, militares e religiosas, através da análise de métodos de recrutamento, condições de trabalho e do sistema de recompensas e reconhecimento. Examinamos as diversas atividades dos intérpretes, as suas especificidades técnicas e as competências necessárias para a sua execução e, em particular, a correlação entre as capacidades linguísticas e as tarefas, e como se interpretava a mesma, incluindo as opiniões dos próprios intérpretes sobre o seu trabalho.

Consideramos os parâmetros utilizados para avaliar a qualidade da mediação

linguística, além das iniciativas para a melhorar e assegurar, como indicadores da importância desta função para os participantes nos Descobrimentos.

Palavras-chave: língua, descobrimentos, interpretação, Estado da Índia, Companhia de Jesus.

A IMPORTÂNCIA DA INTERPRETAÇÃO
NOS DESCOBRIMENTOS PORTUGUESES EM ÁFRICA E NA ÁSIA

RESUMO ALARGADO

Durante as viagens marítimas de exploração empreendidas pelos portugueses nas costas africanas e asiáticas e posteriormente no seu estabelecimento em pontos estratégicos das mesmas, os navegadores entraram em contacto com diversos povos, línguas e culturas até então desconhecidos com os quais quiseram desenvolver parcerias comerciais e militares e, se possível, convertê-los à fé cristã. Todos estes processos requeriam uma interação verbal intensiva e por conseguinte, a mediação linguística. Apesar dos contactos seculares com os Mouros arabófonos que ocupavam uma parte da Península Ibérica desde o século oitavo, os portugueses não conseguiram antecipar bem as suas necessidades de interpretação durante as viagens, por se tratar de uma situação inédita, por desconhecerem os seus interlocutores e por não existirem conterrâneos seus que já soubessem falar a língua do Outro (o que não fora o caso com a língua árabe). Os navegadores levavam a bordo escravos provavelmente obtidos através de comerciantes do norte de África, que esperavam que pudessem facilitar os contactos com outros povos, e procuravam nativos para prestar informações acerca da geografia, recursos e senhores das terras, os chamados *línguas* que antes de serem intérpretes, no sentido de traduzirem diálogos, eram informadores e, assim, frequentemente associados na mentalidade portuguesa, e não só, da época a traidores ou arrenegados.

Deste modo, a comunicação com os povos contactados, quando não podia ser levada a cabo por intérpretes de língua árabe, começou por ser muito rudimentar, com recurso a gestos, desenhos na areia e às poucas palavras inteligíveis através de conhecimentos adquiridos rápida e informalmente. Aqueles que mais progrediram na aprendizagem de outra língua tiveram um contacto mais prolongado com a mesma durante estadias, muitas vezes forçadas, no outro país, tratando-se de escravos

capturados e trazidos a Portugal ou portugueses, maioritariamente degredados, que se aventuravam em terras africanas. No entanto, os elos com uma outra cultura assim criados levantavam dúvidas acerca da sua lealdade e em última instância provocavam o menosprezo ou a rejeição pelos seus compatriotas, fossem eles portugueses ou africanos. Encontrando-se na margem entre duas culturas antagónicas, sobretudo quando se tratava de uma cristã e a outra muçulmana, os *línguas* foram obrigados a desenvolver estratégias de sobrevivência, tais como favorecer alternadamente as duas partes com informações (por isso foram frequentemente acusados de serem espiões) e aproveitando o poder e influência obtidos através dos conhecimentos linguísticos e culturais para se posicionarem como atores incontornáveis nas negociações, exacerbando com o seu comportamento as suspeitas a seu respeito. Os soldados arrenegados e convertidos à fé islâmica operavam como informadores e mensageiros-intérpretes do inimigo, enquanto os *lançados*, degredados deixados em terras africanas para explorarem e fornecerem informações a expedições subsequentes, aliavam-se com os potentados locais para granjearem um lugar seguro nessa sociedade, posição essa que seria difícil de obter no seio da sociedade lusa.

Como consequência, tornou-se indispensável aos portugueses criarem mecanismos que pudessem assegurar os bons ofícios dos seus mediadores linguísticos, mas o sistema de recompensas muitas vezes dececionava os intérpretes que se consideravam mais valiosos e competentes que os seus empregadores. Com efeito, as remunerações não se baseavam no seu desempenho técnico, mas antes em factores como a lealdade, (que se manifestava através do favorecimento aos portugueses ao contrário da neutralidade hoje esperada de um intérprete), origens e religião. Apercebemo-nos da pouca importância que as altas figuras do *Estado da Índia* atribuíam à mediação linguística, em parte precisamente em função das origens e da atuação pouco transparente dos seus agentes, em comparação com as conquistas militares e acordos comerciais que geravam o poder e a riqueza almejados.

Além das tarefas de um *língua* ultrapassarem em larga medida as de um intérprete dos nossos dias, visto que não se distinguia entre tradução oral e escrita e serem responsabilizados pela consecução dos objetivos pretendidos, as competências também divergiam muito das necessárias para o exercício atual desta profissão. A análise

detalhada das mesmas revela que frequentemente interessava apenas o resultado de um encontro ou negociação e não os métodos nem o nível de desempenho do intérprete. Se por um lado, as competências linguísticas necessárias eram bastante inferiores, visto que os intérpretes podiam trabalhar de e para todas as línguas de que tinham um domínio operacional, precisavam de saber defender-se numa negociação num terreno desconhecido e hostil, por ser não só o tradutor mas também um mensageiro não acompanhado. Nesse diálogo assíncrono que podia durar dias ou mesmo semanas ou atuando junto de uma embaixada, o mediador linguístico levava um conteúdo ao qual lhe cabia a ele dar a forma, podendo adaptá-la à evolução do encontro.

Perante estas circunstâncias, nem a desconfiança nos intérpretes nem a insatisfação com o seu desempenho devem constituir surpresas, tendo em conta a falta de iniciativas para acautelar a competência e idoneidade dos mediadores linguísticos. O *Estado da Índia* não aplicou nenhuma política precisa de seleção e recrutamento, ao continuar a depender durante longas décadas dos *línguas* que apareciam no momento e lugar certos, tal como acontecera nas primeiras viagens de exploração e, apesar de Portugal ter tido que recorrer a mediadores linguísticos desde o início dos Descobrimentos e de esses influenciarem o seu êxito, não empreendeu nenhuma ação de formação nessa área durante este período.

Os missionários que atuaram no Oriente tiveram uma abordagem muito diferente. Não só foram mais criteriosos na seleção dos intérpretes, excluindo à partida os grupos marginais que constituíam um número considerável daqueles que trabalhavam para o Estado, como também exigiram uma maior competência linguística e técnica, ao requerer a utilização da terminologia adequada, a compreensão dos conceitos religiosos envolvidos e a capacidade de falar em público perante um público numeroso. Enquanto alguns membros da Companhia de Jesus aprenderam línguas orientais, principalmente as faladas na Índia e o japonês, podendo assim dispensar o recurso a intérpretes, ou atuavam eles próprios como intérpretes para os seus confrades, também supriram as suas necessidades de mediação linguística através da formação de rapazes locais em línguas e teologia nos seminários que abriram em Macau, Goa e outros locais do Sul da Índia. Correspondiam-se acerca do desempenho dos seus intérpretes, manifestando tanto o seu agrado pelo contributo positivo que estes davam ao esforço de pregação e de

conversão, como a sua frustração perante a falta ou a inaptidão dos mesmos, oferecendo-nos um rico testemunho sobre o papel da mediação linguística na expansão do catolicismo no Oriente.

Observamos como vários estados, desde o *Estado da Índia* ao Japão, recorriam aos préstimos dos intérpretes jesuítas por apreciaram a sua competência e integridade moral. Deste modo, as várias vertentes da Expansão portuguesa entrelaçavam-se, em função das embaixadas terem ao mesmo tempo objetivos políticos, comerciais e religiosos. A presença de mercadores e aventureiros portugueses em África e na Ásia também ultrapassou a estatal e a formação de comunidades de origens mistas, interculturais, criou comunidades bilingues cujos membros podiam assegurar a mediação linguística entre europeus e locais, levando à utilização da língua portuguesa como língua de diplomacia durante um longo período, inclusive em lugares inesperados, tais como o Sião. Desta forma, os intérpretes de língua portuguesa constituem uma das vertentes humanas mais duradouras dos Descobrimentos e da Expansão na Ásia, sendo muito relevantes para a disseminação e preservação da língua e cultura portuguesas nessas zonas, apesar da marginalização a que foram votados pelas autoridades administrativas.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERPRETING DURING THE PORTUGUESE DISCOVERIES IN AFRICA AND ASIA

Introduction

Conference interpreters claim a long history for their profession. Indeed, as Pöchhacker and Shlesinger rightly point out in their introduction to The Interpreting Studies Reader[1], interpreters must have been involved in the first contact between ancient peoples. However, we know relatively little about our predecessors, who were not of course conference interpreters nor do they fit into the other modern-day categories of linguistic mediators, nor how and where they worked. Even though interpreting historians have claimed a history for this activity spanning at least 4,500 years, it is sparsely documented and there are many gaps in our knowledge that it would be interesting to try and fill as a means of recording the history of encounters between civilisations, in particular the ways in which linguistic communication was attempted.

Since the current age of globalisation stretching back to the establishment of the first plurilingual international organisations in the aftermath of the first world war, a rapid expansion and evolution in linguistic mediation has taken place, which has intensified with the proliferation of regional organisations over the past fifty years; boom in international commerce, and multiplication of migratory flows. Against this backdrop, the study of interpreting in another period of globalisation, the Portuguese Discoveries, appears relevant for our understanding of the dynamics of inter-cultural communication in such times of change to the world order and the position and competences of the interpreters themselves. Moreover, in view of the current international system in which the Portuguese language is vying for a position among the elite group of vehicular global languages, by amongst other policy initiatives investing

1 Pöchhacker, F.& Shlesinger, M. (eds.) *The Interpreting Studies Reader*, Routledge, London 2002.

in promoting its usage in multilateral fora and conference interpreter training and skilling, we should know more about how it spread during the overseas expansion and the contribution that interpreting made to the phenomenon of Portuguese becoming a *lingua franca* in the Indian Ocean. After all, this was also an era in which linguistic mediation underwent rapid development and mutation, and in particular, one in which such processes involved first and foremost the Portuguese language.

The Discoveries were indeed a unique and unrepeatable moment in history, bringing peoples; cultures, and continents into contact for the first time, requiring new competences hitherto ignored or of limited relevance. Our aim is to explore how the Portuguese went about securing communication across the linguistic and cultural divides in these unprecedented encounters between people of different continents who on many occasions had practically no previous information about each other. We shall endeavour to comprehend why they adopted the approaches they did, what the possible alternatives could have been and what the results and consequences were, with a view to increasing and organising our knowledge of this aspect of the historical period in question and improving our comprehension of the expectations surrounding linguistic mediation and mediators at that time.

For approximately one hundred and fifty years following the conquest of Ceuta in 1415, Portuguese navigators explored the seven seas and, in particular, the coasts of South America, Africa and Asia. At the outset of this undertaking, which began in North West Africa, the aims were clearly set out as encompassing the search for military allies; commercial opportunities, and evangelisation of pagan peoples, likewise already identified as three primordial areas of interpreting activity over previous ages. During the fifteenth century, each new expedition ventured a little further southward along the West African coast, constantly finding new languages and cultures, with some groups more inclined to interact with the visitors than others. Subsequently, the discovery of the sea route to India by Vasco da Gama opened up a whole new continent and access to the much-desired commodities of Asia, at the dawn of the new century.

Not only did this turning-point trigger a geographical shift in the focus of the undertaking, but also a strategic one as dominance of key trade routes became

imperative, necessitating the establishment of Christian communities in India, and thereby fostering intense activities by the religious orders. We propose to examine how linguistic and cultural mediation was undertaken in these various settings described and how it accompanied the development of the Portuguese expansion on its path East, as it contacted a wide range of civilisations with which it maintained close; direct, and differentiated relationships over a sustained period of time.

At the ground level, this study fits in to Adamo's characterisation of translation histories as being "*not far removed from the micro-historical goal to discover or rediscover previously neglected subjects, alien to the grand narratives of traditional history"*[2], for indeed the history of the Portuguese Discoveries, particularly the principal sources comprised of contemporary chronicles, is one of military, commercial and religious conquest for an audience which wished to gloat over the glorious triumphs of a chosen nation. Within the field of interpreting studies, our topic corresponds to one of Baigorri's[3] research proposals for interpreting history in that we shall address oral linguistic mediation in a given period of history and in a specific setting.

The history of interpretation inevitably faces a problem of sources: primary sources do not exist at all prior to the advent of audio recorders, whilst secondary sources are nothing if not fragmented, as numerous scholars have complained. Rarely do they include transcriptions or specific examples of interpreting activity or even detailed or lengthy reference to the business of linguistic mediation and all too often, they merely record the presence of an interpreter without even mentioning his name. Although challenging, it is undoubtedly of the utmost importance to get as close to the original raw information as possible, for any written accounts of oral linguistic mediation are necessarily vulnerable to adulteration or even deliberate manipulation, which requires careful attention to be broken down. In addition, the further away we go from the actual event or an eye-witness, the more difficult it becomes to ascertain the true scope and

2 Adamo, Sergia "Microhistory of Translation" in G. L. Bastin y P. F. Bandia (eds.). *Charting the future of translation history*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2006, p.85.

3 cf. Baigorri Jalón, Jesus "Perspectives on the History of Interpretation – Research Proposals" in Georges L. Bastin, Paul F. Bandia (eds.) *Charting the Future of Translation History,* University of Ottawa Press, 2006, pp.101-9.

nature of the interpreter's intervention.

Our treatment of the sources available to us will, therefore, undeniably require a certain amount of compilation and re-construction to achieve a meaningful corpus enabling us to properly identify *interpretatio* and *interpres,* since in view of the incipient state of research in this field, this task remains largely uncompleted. Thereafter, we shall be in a better position to examine how the activities and practitioners were understood, primarily by those they interpreted for, understood here as meaning their masters rather than their audience. For in order to advance the discipline of the history of interpretation as a branch of translation history, this account must go beyond the mere recording of names; dates, and places, which has by and large been the frontier of studies undertaken with reference to Portugal and its language, to analysing what an interpreter's role was understood to be and its real significance to those directly involved. Their statements; reactions to and treatment of this subject will indeed provide us with important information concerning their attitudes towards cross-cultural communication itself, in our opinion, a fundamental aspect of any process of globalisation.

Nevertheless, we must closely examine not only the contents of such affirmations, but also who their authors were, not only in the light of their eclectic nature and thus diverse value, but also to construct our own historiography in this discipline, as proposed by Baigorri, Foz and Alonso[4], among others. It is important for us to properly investigate what really lies behind the handful of extraordinary statements concerning interpreting in the Portuguese Discoveries so frequently repeated that they have become truisms, such as *the Portuguese were the first to create a system for training interpreters* or *the Jesuits did not need interpreters because they could speak all the languages.*

4 cf. Baigorri, ibid; Foz, Clara "Translation, History and the Translation Scholar"in Georges L. Bastin, Paul F. Bandia (eds.) *Charting the Future of Translation History,* University of Ottawa Press, 2006, pp. 131-143; Alonso, Icíar (2008) «Historia, historiografa e interpretación. Propuestas para una historia de la mediación lingüístca oral», en Pegenaute, L.; Decesaris, J.; Tricás, M. y Bernal, E. [eds.] *Actas del III Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Ibérica de Estudios de Traducción e Interpretación. La traducción del futuro: mediación lingüístca y cultural en el siglo XXI. Barcelona 22-24 de marzo de 2007*. Barcelona: PPU. Vol. n.º 2, pp. 429-440.

We have decided to consult three major types of documentation: diaries; chronicles and correspondence. In part, they correspond to the three principal settings in which oral linguistic mediation was undertaken during the Portuguese Discoveries, whereby substantial information concerning interpreting on the voyages and exploration is taken from sailors' diaries, such as Cadamosto, Diogo Gomes de Sintra, and Álvaro Velho's, boosted by second-hand coeval accounts, notably Zurara's *Crónica da Guiné*, and the *Crónica de Rui de Pina* from the mid and late fifteenth century respectively, in addition to the comprehensive histories of the Discoveries, authored by Fernão Lopes de Castanheda and Gaspar Correia in the sixteenth. The latter, along with the collected correspondence contained in the *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque* also constitute the main documents which we shall examine in order to document linguistic and cultural mediation in the *Estado da Índia*[5] and in interaction with established Asian kingdoms within the Indian sub-continent and beyond to places such as Japan; Siam, and China, in the broad domains of administration; commerce and diplomatic interpreting, including peace-brokering.

A number of documents produced by interpreters themselves, one of the objectives of which was to provide information to the Portuguese authorities, such as early sixteenth-century letters written to the Portuguese king and the detailed testimony of trading activity and Indian societies penned by Duarte Barbosa, will also provide a useful point of comparison and contrast, as well as giving us a clear insight into their personalities and opinions. With regard to interpreting in religious settings, the most abundant material can be found in the form of letters among the members of the Society of Jesus, compiled by Joseph Wicki in the eighteen-volume *Documenta Indica*, and also in the collection of letters of Saint Francis Xavier.

The discipline of translation history has been firmly in the hands of translation scholars for some decades, whereas the history of interpretation has received less attention in general and above all, its technical specificities have remained largely unrecorded. This is the result not only of the scarcity of research, which has affected

5 Portuguese India, which included Portuguese possessions stretching from Mozambique to Timor.

Portugal and the Portuguese language in particular, despite the richness in this domain provided by the multitude of pioneering ventures around the globe, but also the undeniable fact that this subject has frequently been left in the hands of general historians whose rather brief studies have fallen into the trap described by Adamo, whereby their *"historical coherence is actually gained through marginalizing and suppressing anything not leading in a definite, teleological direction, through according privilege only to certain perspectives and subjects"*[6], that is to say, they appear to have started their research with an answer, which they have then sought to justify. Evidently, there is a very great danger that such accounts will become the collections of *"innumerable anecdotes from secondary sources"* that Santoyo warns us of, which undermine the credibility of this particular micro-history.[7]

In this study, however, we shall strive to address those questions pertaining to linguistic and cultural communication which appear to have been at the centre of the concerns of those engaged in and affected by the Portuguese expansion, in particular those who required linguistic mediation, but including the interpreters themselves. As this was to a large extent a new activity, with previous experience having been limited to interaction with the Arabic-speaking Moors, firstly in the Iberian peninsula and subsequently in North Africa, the starting point is seemingly the search for the appropriate talent and what that was understood to be in the context of a voyage of exploration and if the methods used were suitable and successful or not. We shall pursue this line by studying the early attempts to produce the necessary skills; adapt them to given but unpredictable situations and hence the outcomes and quality of interpreter performance in such settings.

We shall then move on to the exploration of India and the first contacts with other Asian peoples, with a particular focus on the relationships built up between interpreters and the *Estado da Índia*, and the way in which the criteria for the judgements on interpreters was affected by the historical context in which they worked, rather than by

6 Adamo, Sergia, Ibid, p. 87.

7 Santoyo, J.-C. (2006). «Blank Spaces in the History of Translation». En G. L. Bastin y P. F. Bandia (eds.). *Charting the future of translation history*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press. 11-43

their technical competence. We shall also examine the system of rewards and the status attributed to linguistic mediators, including the search for signs of the recognition of a distinct profession as key indicators of the importance attached to their function by the administration, comparing the situation of interpreters working for the Portuguese and those in the employ of other nations. We also consider it important to devote some thought to the different kinds of acts which were mediated by interpreters during this period; the languages and language regimes, as well as the conditions in which they worked, for such analysis is imperative for understanding how the function of linguistic mediation was understood several centuries ago, instead of basing our assumptions on what we know from our contemporary world. By identifying the technical aspects of such tasks, we will then be in a position to consider the competences required and subsequently the appropriate parameters for gauging interpreting quality and evaluating the first-hand opinions given on quality in our sources.

Last but not least, we shall take a close look at how interpreters were prepared for their task, for chronologically all professional activities emerge before due consideration is given not only to the skills set and knowledge required, but also how they can be passed on to subsequent generations of practitioners, in order to improve their effectiveness, through the medium of formal training. This is again considered to be a key indicator of the relevance attributed to the function by interested parties, in addition to providing clues regarding the development of interpreting both during and after the period under review.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE AND INTERPRETING HISTORY

1.1 THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE IN GLOBAL COMMUNICATION

The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are often referred to as the era of globalisation, although what is being referred to in actual fact is the globalisation of the world economy and communications, as more and more economic and political events have repercussions right around the globe and more and more people in remote places can communicate with each other. The activity of interpreting, as a form of cultural and linguistic intermediation, is of course involved in this phenomenon, as it was involved in all previous phenomena of globalisation, which include the era of the Discoveries, that is to say, the voyages which brought peoples from different continents into contact for the first time. The Portuguese played a leading role in this process, as their mariners explored the coasts of South America; Africa and Asia during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, providing the Portuguese authorities and Europe in general with a wealth of knowledge of people; lands; religions and cultures hitherto the object of myths and legends.

The mastermind of the Portuguese Discoveries was Prince Henry the Navigator, attributed with having persuaded his father, King John I, to undertake the Conquest of Ceuta in North Africa in 1415, which was to give rise to the maritime voyages that would take Portuguese seafarers to right around the globe over the following one hundred and thirty years. The royal chronicler, Gomes Eanes de Zurara, writing within Henry's lifetime, set out five main objectives of these expeditions. The first of them was to obtain information about the undiscovered lands lying to the South of Cape Bojador[8],

8 A headland on the Northern coast of modern-day Western Sahara, where many ships had been wrecked as a result of the sharp reefs and shallow waters.

which inspired fear among sailors. As a result of Henry's own devoutness, they also included taking the Christian faith to the pagans; bringing goods back to Portugal and seeking out allies to join the fight against Portugal Moslem enemies. Although the Portuguese were of course more focused on flows of information and merchandise from the newly discovered lands back to Portugal, they did of course take their own knowledge (of sailing and weaponry, for example); culture and language with them, causing a major impact on the civilisations they encountered.

The Portuguese were thus the first Europeans to reach a vast number of points along the coast of three continents, breaking the ground for others to follow in their wake, who would benefit from the knowledge they had obtained and which was quickly disseminated across a Europe thirsty for information of other cultures and, of course, trading opportunities. The Portuguese were also the first to establish and nurture a network of relations and alliances with local leaders and their communities. Such relations evidently had to be negotiated through the medium of language and in the absence of a common tongue, through linguistic mediation. Thus, the Portuguese language was the first European one to be used in many of such settings, the first one for which linguistic mediators were sought and found, profoundly influencing the role which it would come to play from areas of West Africa through to South East Asia over the following centuries.

Indeed, one of the salient features of Portugal's history had already been the constant contact with a people whose language they did not readily comprehend: the Moors of North Africa whose presence in Iberia dated back to the early eighth century. Clearly, by the time of the Discoveries, the Portuguese would have been well accustomed to working with linguistic mediators for the Arabic language. Whilst this experience could have provided them with an insight which many other Western Europeans would not have obtained, for their contacts were almost exclusively intra-continental; with co-religionists and through the medium of a common language, Latin,[9]

9 Clearly, the context of the Crusades is an exception: when French was not in use as a common language among the multilingual Christian armies, interpreters were commonplace, as they were for interaction with the enemy forces. Cf. Bowen, M., Bowen, D., Kaufmann, F. & Kurz, I. Interpreters and the Making of History in Delisle, J. & Woodsworth, J. (Eds.), *Translators through History* John

it could also have beguiled them into thinking that they could employ the same strategies for all encounters with other peoples, that is to say, to resort to an existing and relatively abundant pool of (Portuguese-Arabic) bilinguals and hence underestimate the need for greater planning of their interpreting needs.

Nevertheless, the Portuguese and their language were the pathfinders and the first to encounter and address the need for such a variety of interpreters. Thus, by way of a very broad statement, we can defend that the age of Discoveries and in part the existence of linguistic mediators turned the Portuguese language into something resembling a supra-regional or world language, curiously enough with a far greater projection outside its native continent than within. As we shall see below, it became one of the prime media for pursuing communication between people from different continents, a vehicular language used by many non-native European; African, and Asian speakers, just as English is the *lingua franca* of today's globalisation.

Nevertheless, over the intervening period of four hundred years through to the early twentieth century, the position of the Portuguese language on the world stage significantly waned, after the country's imperial fortunes peaked and then entered into a long and gradual decline, in parallel to the country's political and economic challenges. Even so, out of the thousands of languages spoken around the world, it is now one of the most widely spoken ones10 with some two hundred and forty million native speakers, predominantly in Brazil, but also in Portugal; Timor-Leste; Angola; Mozambique; Cape Verde; Guinea-Bissau; São Tomé and Príncipe11 where Portuguese is the official language. Portuguese-based creoles also survive in a number of locations in South America; Africa, and Asia, where Portuguese is not the official or native language. This wide geographical distribution mirrors the coverage of the Discoveries and the extraordinary impact that this nation's language and culture had during the

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Benjamins, Amsterdam, 1995.

10 Portuguese is the third most widely-spoken European language in the world today and alongside English and French, in the fairly unique position of being spoken as an official language on the four continents of Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia.

11 Portuguese is the only official language in these countries, with the exception of Tétum in Timor-Leste.

period under review, when the resident population (i. e. native speakers) in Portugal numbered just over one million. Yet, throughout the twentieth century as multilateral global governance gathered pace, it punched well below its weight on the international stage12, having long ago surrendered its position as a vehicular language or language of diplomacy. It is not an official language of the United Nations system, even though, by number of native speakers, it ranks above both French and Russian which are.

This may appear a paradox, that whilst the number of native speakers has increased over the past century, the language's position has weakened, but in fact, what determines the status of a language is also its use by non-native speakers as a second language; its geographical distribution, and its presence as an official language in international organisations. In this regard, the delayed independence of the Portuguese colonies in Africa has meant that the number of Portuguese-speaking delegations in global *fora* has only recently risen from two to eight.[13] Furthermore, whilst Portuguese has become established in countries such as Mozambique and Angola in particular, where it is spoken by an ever-increasing proportion of the population as a mother tongue or second language and is the language of education; for contact with the authorities; of national unity and as the means of communication between different linguistic groups, beyond the borders of the officially Lusophone countries, according to Bellos14, the use of Portuguese as a vehicular language is minimal.

His view, though, is in fact at odds with de Swaan's classification of Portuguese as one of the twelve super-central languages of the planet today, a position that Lusophone countries, since the founding of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries in 199615 have been keen to defend, not least through the promotion of the learning of Portuguese by non-native speakers and its inclusion in the official or working languages of different international organisations. Thus, the seeds planted during the Discoveries

12 Bellos, David, *Is that a fish in your ear?* Penguin, 2012

13 Firstly, an increase to seven following the independence of the African colonies in 1974 and 1975 and the addition of Timor-Leste to the group in 2002.

14 Bellos op. cit. pp. 356-7 (footnote 5).

15 Comunidade de Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP) – Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries.

could still determine a more powerful and visible position for the Portuguese language in current and future global affairs.

Curiously, it is primarily in Europe, with over ten percent of the world's population, but home to only three to four per cent of the world's languages and just seven per cent of native Lusophones16, that the staunch defence of linguistic diversity by various supra-national entities, such as the European Union and the Council of Europe, has allowed Portuguese to be spoken in the international arena and to be a medium through which communication is established with other linguistic communities via interpretation. The European Union's policy of multilingualism within its institutions, giving rise to the largest interpreting services in the world today, is enshrined in its founding treaty and has not been subject to revision.17 There are indeed many European countries themselves that are plurilingual and have adopted two or more languages as official languages within their national borders. These languages may be used in all walks of life, including in legislative bodies, meaning that the Parliament of the European Union is far from being alone in boasting an interpreting service to ensure communication among elected representatives. In fact, within some nations, there is a trend towards greater linguistic plurality, with recent decisions taken, for example, in Spain to recognise the right to use regional languages in the national parliament18 and in Wales to foresee the use of Welsh alongside English in the Welsh National Assembly.19

Over the past few years, the United Nations and other important international actors have undertaken initiatives to enhance the systems of plurilingual communication in place in supra-national African organisations, such as the Africa Union and the various sub-regional economic and political entities[20], which will bring benefits to the

16 Around 15 million Portuguese speakers live in Europe, including the diaspora.

17 Treaty of the European Union (2012), Article 3, para. 3 “It shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced.”

18 Proposición de Reforma del Reglamento del Congreso, 410/0000012, 28 January 2011

19 National Assembly for Wales (Official Languages) Act 2012.

20 For example, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) of which Portuguese is an official language.

position of the Portuguese language. The five Lusophone nations are surrounded by Anglophone or Francophone neighbours, meaning that theirs is the minority language in sub-regional[21] contacts and fora, and thus the adoption of a common language would inevitably be to the detriment of Portuguese.

Brazil is the largest, most populous and richest nation in South America, but the only one where Portuguese is spoken, whilst the vast majority of the region speaks Spanish. Its recent economic boom and newly acquired status of emerging power, as a member of the G20 group of nations and possible permanent member of a reformed Security Council of the United Nations, have raised its awareness of the economic and diplomatic potential of a Lusophone community and galvanised its support of the use of the Portuguese language in international meetings. Upon its independence in 2002, Timor-Leste adopted Tetum and Portuguese as its official languages with the latter choice having been influenced by historical cultural ties. This decision, along with the special attention given to the Special Administrative Region of Macao by China, as a platform for relations with the Lusophone world through the medium of Portuguese, have also enabled the language to somewhat surprisingly renew its foothold in Asia.

Thus, after a long period outside the top division of world languages, Portuguese is now restating its claim to be a leading player in global communication, on the basis of a unique geographical coverage that largely reflects the development of the Discoveries. As we study the dissemination of the Portuguese language throughout Africa and Asia, we shall observe that the presence of people capable of undertaking linguistic mediation between Portuguese and local languages was a key factor in this process.

1.2 INTERPRETING AND INTERPRETING STUDIES IN PORTUGAL

Portugal today is in the rather rare position of being an almost completely monolingual state, whereas in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, there were Arabic

21 Namely, the sub-regions of West Africa, where Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau are located, and Southern Africa, for Angola and Mozambique.

and Hebrew speakers, in addition to Portuguese and dialectal variations. Currently, Portuguese is spoken throughout the national territory, including in the relatively distant archipelagos of the Azores and Madeira and is the mother tongue of 99.7% of the resident native population. That is to say, Portuguese is the mother tongue of all Portuguese with the exception of a few thousand inhabitants of some outlying villages in the North East of the country who speak Mirandese as their first language and Portuguese as their second language. There are small regional variations in Portuguese, but there are no regional dialects. In addition, to a large degree, the resident immigrant population is also Portuguese-speaking, since the largest communities come from Brazil and Cape Verde.[22]

This has meant, though, that up until now, even though Portuguese has been an official language of the European Union since accession in 1986 and is covered by the respective interpreting services of the institutions, interpretation has been rather a distant notion for the Portuguese general public. The profession of conference or indeed any other kind of interpreter is not particularly well-known, since interpreters barely intervene in the country's domestic affairs. One interesting development for the language professions, is the fact that patterns of immigration to Portugal have changed in recent years, with more arrivals from Eastern Europe, in particular Ukraine and Romania; China; the Indian sub-continent and even nominally Anglophone and Francophone Africa.

Overall, the number of different languages spoken as mother tongues by immigrants has increased, leading to policy measures to on the one hand foster their integration through the provision of Portuguese language courses (under the auspices of the National Centre for Migrant Support – CNAI) and on the other, cater to their immediate communication needs through the provision of a telephone translation service (in fact, an interpretation service, since it is the translation of the spoken and not the written word) available in 60 languages. Interpreters are also used sporadically by

22 The mother-tongue of the majority of Cape Verdean immigrants is Creole (there are several, all Portuguese-based), but Portuguese, as the only official language and the language of education, is widely spoken and understood in the archipelago, leading to Cape Verdeans in Portugal generically being considered Lusophones.

the Borders and Immigration Service and the judicial authorities, for quite different languages to those which are most commonly used in conference interpreting settings.

This could perhaps increase the visibility of the profession, but at the same time it should not be forgotten that with only around 445,000 foreign residents[23] or 4.4% of the total population, almost half of whom are from other Portuguese-speaking countries, Portugal has a relatively low proportion of immigrants compared to other Western European countries, such as France or Germany, where foreign residents account for approximately 7% of the total population[24]. Furthermore, with the commonly observed tendency of Ukrainian, Romanian and Moldovan immigrants to quickly become conversant in Portuguese, the number of foreign residents who are unable to communicate and conduct their daily affairs in the national language is really rather small, hence the demand for linguistic mediation continues to be residual. As a result, to the best of our knowledge, there is no formal training available anywhere in community or legal interpreting, with these fields being far less developed and professionalised than in most other Western European countries or those with high levels of immigration, such as the United States.

As far as conference interpreting is concerned, there are two conflicting tendencies governing the demand for interpreting services on the international stage: on the one hand, more and more meetings are conducted entirely in English, without recourse to linguistic mediation, but on the other hand, the number; variety, and complexity of contacts is increasing as a result of today's globalisation. For example, there is greater international judicial cooperation than ever before, responding to the phenomenon of cross-border crime, and we are witnessing the rapid integration of certain Lusophone countries into the world economy, such as Angola. Thus, there is a demand for high-quality linguistic mediation between Portuguese and other languages in specialised or technical affairs, and at the same time, for reasons of prestige and visibility, it is also sought at an official, diplomatic level.

23 O Público 25.7.2011 referring to the 2010 Annual Report of the *Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras* (Borders and Immigration Service).

24 Costa, Paula *Imigração em Portugal: tendências recentes* in Cadernos da FLUP.

In Portugal, both trends have left their mark in recent years, with there having been steady demand for interpreters from international organisations, but a general decline in the number of multilingual events at home. Nevertheless, both the profession itself, interpreting in all its shapes and sizes and the discipline of interpreting studies suffer from a lack of visibility. There are several possible and varied explanations for these waters having remained by and large uncharted: interpreting, and in this case we are referring specifically to conference interpreting, only came to be recognised as a professional activity in the early twentieth century,[25] that is to say much more recently than the vast majority of professions, whilst community interpreting is not recognised even today in many countries. It only emerged as a field of study in the Western world after the end of the Second World War, and interpreting studies only started to obtain its own space as an autonomous discipline from translation studies in the early 1990's. Moreover, interpreter education tends to focus on the acquisition of the practical, vocational skills for exercising the profession, rather than theoretical study and research.[26]

In addition, there are other factors which are linked to the specific Lusophone context, namely that in the early decades of conference interpreting and the appearance of formal training of interpreters in a higher education context, there were only two independent Portuguese-speaking nations neither of which played a prominent role in international affairs, meaning that the language was far from the vanguard of these movements. It was in these times, in particular, that Portuguese failed to make its mark in the newly founded organisations. Thus, a vicious circle was created: scant demand for highly-skilled professionals and no formal training initiatives to create them, a cycle which was only broken by Portugal's accession to the European Economic Community in 1986, which finally put an end to decades of relative isolation[27], whilst only now is this phenomenon being addressed with regard to Africa.

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25 The League of Nations founded in the aftermath of the First World War was the first international body to employ its own conference interpreters.

26 cf. Pöchhacker & Shlesinger, *op. cit.*, pp 3-7.

27 Portugal, in particular, was isolated duirng the colonial wars of the 1960's, whilst the military dictatorship in Brazil also prevented this country from playing a leading role in international affairs.

Regarding interpreting studies, there is unsurprisingly a distinct lack of critical mass in Portugal. At various times, practical training in conference interpreting has been included in the syllabus of translation degree courses, but generally as a poor relative warranting no more than an introductory course, often not taught by academic staff but rather by practitioners. Furthermore, its presence has frequently been somewhat fleeting, given the difficulties in integrating it into the heavily-formatted university programmes. The academic output of corresponding departments has thus tended to concentrate on translation studies. Furthermore, few researchers of linguistic mediation outside the Portuguese-speaking world have specialised in Portuguese as a working language and therefore do not have ready access to many of the sources, particularly the historical ones.

1.3 THE HISTORY OF LINGUISTIC MEDIATION

Portugal's blessing or curse is to be a small country located on the periphery, on the very edge of Europe, facing away from the centre of the continent and looking out across the Atlantic towards the Americas and Africa. For much of its almost nine hundred years of history, it has played only a marginal role in major European affairs, although for a short time, it stood at the very centre of a process, the Age of Discoveries, which has affected global geopolitics ever since. Yet, outside the country's borders, Portugal's feats are much less known or studied than those of her neighbour, Spain, despite the fact that Vasco da Gama's discovery of the sea route to India had a far greater impact on late fifteenth century Europe than Columbus's discovery of America. It goes without saying that the study of oral translation and linguistic and cultural mediation in the Portuguese endeavours has barely begun, especially in comparison to the attention given to the Spanish interpreters in New World, and despite the increasing interest of the discipline of Translation Studies in the history of language professions, as a branch of the history of cultural practices.

Meanwhile, the history of oral translation or interpretation in general has been largely ignored by political historians, more concerned with the history of the

protagonists rather than that of the supporting cast. Only a handful of published works attempt to give a general overview of interpreting history, such as Ruth Roland's widely acclaimed *Interpreters as Diplomats.* Yet, its treatment of the history of (translation and) interpretation in Portugal and Portugal's affairs is paradigmatic, in that only two or three pages are devoted to the first European power to establish regular contact with modern-day Brazil and a vast arc of countries running from West Africa to Japan, even though one chapter is devoted to Europe and the New World and another to the East-West confrontation with China, Japan and India. Furthermore, her opening reference to Portugal contains at least two basic factual errors concerning the first Portuguese embassy to China.[28] Thus, Portugal has rarely warranted more than an anecdotal reference in generalist studies, with the noble exception of a handful of scholars with a background in translation and interpreting, who have attempted to cut back the undergrowth and shed some light on the activities of our distant predecessors.

In this regard, Santoyo[29] refers to the lack of a general history and the many blank spaces in the history of translation, not least the history of interpretation and to the tendency to produce fragmentary and anecdotal collections lifted from secondary sources. This study does not aspire to write a general history of interpreting, for it is indeed a long one, with various scholars, such as Ingrid Kurz, having proposed that this activity dates back at least 4,500 years. Nor will it attempt to span the history of interpreting in Portugal and Portuguese affairs, whose origins can be traced back to the formation of the nation and beyond, that is to say, the Christian Reconquest of the Western fifth of the Iberian Peninsula culminating in the founding of one of Europe's

28 Roland claims that the Portuguese ambassador, Tomé Pires, was the brother of Simão Peres de Andrade, another member of the expedition, when clearly Andrade was the brother of the captain of a small fleet that travelled to China, Fernão Peres de Andrade. She also claims that Pires was ousted from China, when in fact, numerous Portuguese historians defend that he either died in captivity in China in 1524, or lived quietly in the country until his natural death in 1540, but in any case, he was never allowed to leave China.

29 Santoyo, J.-C. (2006). *Blank Spaces in the History of Translation* in G. L. Bastin y P. F. Bandia (eds.). *Charting the future of translation history*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2006 pp. 11-43. Accessed at: http://pt.scribd.com/doc/35424380/Charting-the-Future-of-Translation-History on 1.12.2013

oldest nations in 1143, but rather seeks to adopt one of Baigorri's proposals for doctoral or post-doctoral research[30] in that it will address the history of linguistic and cultural mediation during a given period in certain territories.

The main period in question is that of the Portuguese Age of Discoveries, generally defined as spanning approximately one and a half centuries from the Conquest of Ceuta in 1415 to the mid-sixteenth century and the arrival in Japan in 1543. Yet, the effects that the building of the Eastern Empire had on the use of the Portuguese language continued long after the end of this golden age and the loss of national independence in 1580 triggered by heirless King Sebastian's untimely death in North Africa two years earlier. Thus, we shall focus on the interaction between the Portuguese and Africans and Asians, from the Eastern Atlantic coasts to the Indian Ocean region, deliberately ignoring the concomitant dealings with the other side of the Atlantic, South America, with a view to obtaining a certain depth of analysis. We shall follow the dynamics of the Discoveries during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as the Portuguese progressed further South and then East, in their bid to reach the riches of India and the Orient, for our first focus of interest is on the observation of initial encounters, how linguistic mediators participated in them and the way in which they were perceived by their clients and employers, from both sides whenever it is possible to obtain this information.

This is probably the most attractive period and geographical location for such a study, in view of the multitude of different languages and cultures involved and the absolutely pioneering achievements of the Portuguese. Thus, it should come as no surprise that of the few known studies in Portugal to have emerged in the field of the history of linguistic mediation, two should be related to this area.[31] A third one by Manuela Paiva narrates the history of translating and interpreting in Macao, also

30 Baigorri Jalon, Jesús *Perspectives on the History of Interpretation*: *Research Proposals* in G. L. Bastin y P. F Bandia (eds.). *Charting the future of translation history*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2006, p.101

31 Rocha, Sara *Dinâmicas do Poder dos Intérpretes/Línguas na Ásia de João de Barros*, Universidade Aberta, 2010; Castilho Pais, Carlos *Apuntes de Historia de la Traducción Portuguesa* Diputación Provincial de Soria, 2005.

originally part of the *Estado da Índia*[32], although her thesis focuses primarily on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[33]

The starting point for the study of the history of Portuguese oral translation is without doubt the compilation of references to scholars of Arabic and Interpreters of African and Oriental languages made by Francisco Marques de Sousa Viterbo[34] and published in 1906, a doctor by training, whose historical interests were varied and mostly unrelated to languages or the Discoveries. His findings in the national archives enabled him to identify a number of linguistic mediators, in particular those who were appointed to official posts as part of the Portuguese overseas administration, specifically in the North African possessions where interpreters for Arabic were most necessary.[35] He collected together the Royal orders with the details of the terms under which they were employed by the Crown and certain of their biographical details, such as creed and family ties.

The subject does not appear to have been taken up again in any great depth until Carlos Castilho Pais authored a ground-breaking monograph on the subject of Portuguese linguistic mediation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,[36] yet perhaps given the fact that as far as we know it has only been published in a Spanish translation in Spain, it has not received the attention or follow-up it deserves. He, too, painstakingly gathered together a considerable number of the disparate references to be found in contemporary chronicles and expedition diaries, a corpus further expanded in the on-line periodical *O Língua*[37], laying down the bedrock for subsequent studies such

32 The name given to the Portuguese administration covering the Indian Ocean region from Mozambique to South East Asia.

33 Paiva, Maria Manuel Gomes *Traduzir em Macau. Ler o Outro para uma História da Mediação Linguística e Cultural* Universidade Aberta, XXXX

34 Sousa Viterbo, *Notícia de Alguns Arabistas e Intérpretes de Línguas Africanas e Orientaes* Imprensa da Universidade, Coimbra 1906.

35 The Portuguese presence in Morocco lasted for over three and a half centuries, from the Conquest of Ceuta in 1415 to the withdrawal from Mazagan (now known as El Jadida) in 1769.

36 Cf. Footnote 25.

37 See http://cvc.instituto-camoes.pt/olingua/01/lingua3.html for the first entry in Castilho Pais' Dictionary of Translators and Interpreters.

as this one. As the first extensive study of its kind originating from the field of translation and interpreting studies in Portugal, (as he works in the two fields, we shall encompass them both) its ambition necessarily had to be limited almost to an act of discovery. We can now build on this effort and attempt to go beyond the identification of the interpreters themselves, to answer more specific questions concerning linguistic mediation. Our interest lies in the relevance and importance that was attached to the figure of the *interpres*, (a strong hint has already been given us by the way he has been treated by contemporary historians and chroniclers) and to develop our understanding of what was actually sought from linguistic mediators by their employers.

General historians have frequently made anecdotal references to interpreters and a handful of more substantive articles have been written. Yet, they rarely provide us with an in-depth analysis of any specific aspect of linguistic mediators or mediation, for they are all too often just a curiosity among the author's many areas of interest and for the main, secondary to other historical considerations. As a consequence, one can conclude that they refer to interpreters in history but are not writing a history of interpreting or translation. Two of the studies which have shed interesting light on the characteristics of sixteenth century interpreters are those authored by Couto[38] and Lima Cruz[39], respectively. They both concentrate on the social condition of linguistic mediators and in particular their marginal almost delinquent status, which in the cases under review is what determines their selection and employment as interpreters, and to a certain extent, their behaviour as interpreters. Their lines of research are of the utmost interest to us, for Couto addresses interpreters as a group or groups and identifies certain common traits, whilst Lima Cruz chooses to study one figure in particular, but a paradigmatic one who is encompassed in one of the groups identified by Couto's, and in particular his diverse treatment by various contemporary chroniclers (Barros, Castanheda and Correia).

38 Couto, Dejanirah *The Role of Interpreters, or Linguas, in the Portuguese Empire During the 16th Century.* Accessed at: http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Portuguese_Brazilian_Studies/ejph/html/issue2/html/couto_main.html on 30 March 2014.

39 Cruz, Maria Augusta Lima (1995). «As andanças de um degredado em Terras Perdidas – João Machado». *Mare Liberum*, 5. Lisboa: CNCDP.

Biographic synopses of linguistic mediators have also appeared, providing us with a record of their lives and service to the Portuguese, but not undertaking any real analysis of their work or their representativeness of an occupational or professional group. Their intention is to exhume cultural heroes, Bouchon's unsung pioneers of the Discoveries[40], without whom they claim the Portuguese would surely have floundered. Although such studies are flattering to the practitioners of the modern-day profession, they are not its history, but generally a contribution to the history of certain other social groupings, also on the periphery, and their connection to the Portuguese expansion.

In fact, detailed biographies of what are at best supporting members of the cast can be considered historiographical distortions, for whilst there is an abundance of documents referring to the prolific interaction between European explorers and hitherto unknown peoples during the age of Discoveries, the vast majority are only marginally if at all concerned with the figure who facilitated such exchanges, and we would add that even fewer report on what the *interpres* actually did and how they and their work were received. Whenever possible, we must therefore return to the coeval sources, for as Pym[41] points out, translation history is an age-old activity which we can consider as encompassing the commentaries made in this regard in fifteenth and sixteenth century chronicles and correspondence.

Indeed, Baigorri warns us that one of the potential difficulties of studying interpretation in a given period of history is the scarce; scattered, and fragmentary nature of references, thus their mere compilation, that is to say, their re-construction already represents a significant challenge and offers an opportunity for considerable advances in the discipline. It necessarily has to precede their analysis, but the history of interpreting now has to advance in the latter direction. Several authors, including Alonso[42] and Romano[43], refer to the obvious barrier of the absence of audio recordings

40 Bouchon, Geneviève Pionniers Oubliés: Les Interprètes Portugais en Asie dans les Premières Années du XVI siècle in *Inde Découverte, Inde Retrouvée 1498-1630,* Comissão Nacional para os Descobrimentos Portugueses, Lisbon-Paris 1999

41 Pym, Anthony *Method in Translation History* St.Jerome Publishing, Manchester, 1998 p.12.

42 Alonso, Icíar (2008) «Historia, historiografa e interpretación. Propuestas para una historia de la

of interpreted acts prior to the twentieth century, nor do we know of any transcriptions of earlier interpreter-mediated proceedings. Portuguese chronicles and contemporary correspondence, however, do make useful allusions to interpreter activity, ranging from first-hand accounts of specific mediated events to comments on the ability of certain linguists, which help us form a more balanced view by offsetting the latter's own opinion of their talents. This range of sources on the same subject or event greatly aid us in cross-checking or weighing up the objectivity or otherwise of the information provided, essential for ensuring historiographical credibility as recommended by Castilho Pais.[44]

Undoubtedly, the omissions regarding linguistic mediations far outnumber the observations of it, frustrating attempts, for example, to gather information on this aspect of the first meeting between the Portuguese and Siamese. Yet we should not ignore the significance of "non-sources", nor, in the same light, be bound by the historiography of our predecessors, since as Alonso sagely points out: *"los documentos más preciosos suelen ser los que en principio no estaban destinados a informarnos."*[45] It is by casting one's net in many directions that one can eventually build up a sizeable corpus of references, which provide us with a consolidated picture of the various mediation activities and the different Portuguese sentiments towards their agents. Despite setting temporal and spatial boundaries for this study, this picture will remain far from complete for some time to come, but the compilation of *corpora* enable translation historians to make comparisons and draw parallels and create their own discourse, or as Foz phrased it, "*to discover, construct and de-construct our own historiographical*

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mediación lingüística oral», in PEGENAUTE, L.; DECESARIS, J.; TRICÁS, M. y BERNAL, E. [eds.] *Actas del III Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Ibérica de Estudios de Traducción e Interpretación. La traducción del futuro: mediación lingüística y cultural en el siglo XXI. Barcelona 22-24 de marzo de 2007*. Barcelona: Accessed at http://www.aiet.eu/pubs/actas/III/AIETI_3_IA_Traduccion.pdf on 1.12.13.

43 Romano, David *Hispanojudíos traductores del árabe* in Boletín de la Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona 43, pp. 211–232.

44 Castilho Pais, Carlos *Apuntes de la Historia de la Traducción Portuguesa* Vertere, Vertere, no.7, Excma Diputación Provincial de Soria, 2005.

45 Alonso, Icíar, *op. cit.* p.5. Our translation: "The most valuable documents are usually those which were not intended to inform us."

sources",[46] without this constituting an illegitimate and subjective intervention.[47]

Thus far, comments on interpreters have often been taken at face value leading to widely circulated claims which are not well-founded, hence the need to consider historiographical perspectives, along with the technical considerations of the translator and interpreter. In order to do so, we must combine the perspectives of the historiographer and the translator/interpreter in our construction and de-construction, lest we risk merely dabbling in the field and only scratching the surface. Bandia calls for a "clear and rigorous methodology"[48] to prevent translation history from being disregarded, suggesting observation of Munslow's categorisation of approaches to historiography. Translation scholars can all too easily be trapped by re-constructionism, if they do not question the objectivity of historical accounts, whilst astonishingly, historians of social movements and political changes of the Age of Discoveries can and have unquestioningly accepted highly subjective statements concerning linguists' abilities and feats, as alluded to above. Indeed, Alonso[49] advises translation historians to engage critically with their sources to at least determine discursive strategies; the intended audience and the author's objectives. This is especially important for our subject, for we must strike a balance between focusing on the aspects of greatest frequency, which risks reductionism, and exaggerated extrapolation, based on single pieces of evidence.

The Age of Discovery is the period in Portuguese history which has unsurprisingly been the most studied by both national and foreign historians, including with regard to the history of linguistic mediation. Although this study will undoubtedly entail a re-reading of certain events already dealt with, another angle is far from redundant, since none of the previous studies that we are aware of attempts to provide a definitive and

46 Baigorri Jalón, Jesús and Foz, Clara in G. L. Bastin y P. F Bandia (eds.). *Charting the future of translation history*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2006, p.135.

47 Alonso, Icíar, *op. cit.* p.5

48 Bandia, P.F. *The Impact of Postmodern Discourse on the History of Translation* in G. L. Bastin y P. F Bandia (eds.). *Charting the future of translation history*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2006

49 Alonso, Icíar, *op. cit.*p.5.

comprehensive account. Moreover, Baigorri[50] states that researchers should not be discouraged from tackling the same issues as predecessors, since different approaches can be used and perspectives obtained.

One of our premises will be to abandon the vision of what is considered to be an act of interpretation today, by adjusting our scope to what we believe was considered to be an act of cultural and linguistic mediation in the Portuguese Expansion, for as Alonso[51] points out the cultural practice of interpretation has altered over time, according to the societal rules and requirements of the day. To understand that the goalposts for this practice have constantly shifted is essential for understanding the expectations of users and interpreters themselves in the various historical; political and cultural contexts in which they have undertaken their activity.

In order to gain a new vision, our particular concern will be to ascertain the perceived importance of linguistic and cultural mediation, or in other words to construct a new subjectivity, which is not ours but belongs to the users and participants of mediated events, for as Foz points out,[52] the starting point for translations scholars who wish to write the history of translation is all too often to put the translator centre-stage, whereas frequently for the political historian, the interpreter is irrelevant; invisible (thus not even worth a reference) or at the very least, anonymous. For the history of translation to gain credit as a discipline of history, we agree with Foz that we cannot claim a place for translators based on our determination of the issues and preconceived ideas, for all too often scholars have used sources selectively to prove a hypothesis, rather than to challenge it.[53]

Indeed, instead of lamenting the relative invisibility of interpreters in historical records as an obstacle to the reconstruction of a glorious past, it should immediately

50 Baigorri Jalón, Jesús, *op. cit.*

51 Alonso, Icíar, *op. cit.*

52 Foz, Clara "Translation, History and the Translation Scholar" in G. L. Bastin y P. F Bandia (eds.). *Charting the future of translation history*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2006, p.134

53 cf. Adamo, Sergia "Microhistory of Translation" in En G. L. Bastin y P. F. Bandia (eds.). *Charting the future of translation history*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 2006, p.87.

cause us to question the existence of such a past for this activity. A significant proportion of the numerous references to linguistic and cultural mediators[54] in contemporary Portuguese documents (from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century) merely establish their presence at a given moment but do not add any substantive information on the activity or role. Could we not imagine that such anonymity is the result of professional competence, a mediator who is invisible because he performs his task in complete accordance with expectations? Such a proposal is attractive in part for those who wish to claim greater importance for interpreters than contemporary historians attributed them. Is it merely the reflection of subservient status? Couto suggests that the authorities for whom the interpreters worked (governors and viceroys, in particular) were keen to camouflage them, to offset the power their inherent and acquired power: inherent for they had access to both cultures; acquired through being privy to official and personal secrets.[55]

We must, therefore, try to resolve the paradox of the contrast between the singing of praise by historians who have addressed this issue thus far, on the one hand, and the underscoring of ambiguities arising from coeval records surrounding the status of interpreters during the Portuguese Discoveries,on the other. Are we to claim that history has treated them unfairly, which appears to be the motivation for Bouchon's aforementioned article and Couto's explanation for their anonymity often having been maintained in the contemporary narratives, or is there a justification for the difference in social status between interpreters today and those that worked for the Portuguese during the Discoveries? Is this discrepancy not distorting our view of them and the contemporary historical accounts of their performance?

Pym has posited the very plausible argument that the history of cultures finds it difficult to accommodate intermediaries who are between cultures and hence they are deliberately relegated to a supporting role. Additionally, the contribution in general of minority groups can be purposefully disguised or neglected by historians, in the

54 We have on purpose not used the term *interpreter* here, as the references generally use the word *lingoa* which as shall be explained hereunder has a different scope to that of *interpreter* as understood in today's context.

55 cf. Couto. *op. cit.* p.3

interests of promoting glory, as was the case with the Jewish and Mozarab translators working in Toledo[56] and with whom we may find a parallel in Portuguese history. Yet, of course, as we pointed out above, the Discoveries were a process of cultural exchange, with the Portuguese taking their culture and language with them to distant lands. Theirs was certainly not an immobile culture. Thus, the frequent absence of reference to those who were pivotal in the cultural exchange indicates the Portuguese unwillingness to accept or acknowledge the Other's cultural input. Their interests were mercantile; religious; territorial and thus, the concomitant meeting of cultures was fortuitous. As we shall explore in the next chapter, their outlook was ethnocentric, particularly with regard to non-Christians, who needed to be shown the true faith and the path to salvation.

Since few of the linguistic mediators in their service were Portuguese of noble birth, faithful Christians and unwaveringly obedient to their King, they would have been considered inferior to those in military service or representing the State. Their cultural realm was ambiguous, for they did not have a target culture and as Pym points out were examples of those who did not fit into Schleiermacher's model of belonging to one side or the other:

> *"Wie Einem Lande, so auch Einer Sprache oder der andern, muss der Mensch sich entschliessen anzugehören, oder er schwebt haltungslos in unerfreulicher Mitte."*[57]

Whilst Schleiermacher made this comment of those who wrote in a language other than their mother tongue, believing that such a practice would estrange them from their native language and culture, the fifteenth and sixteenth century interpreter would have been even more affected than the written translator, for their job was normally indeed to speak both languages; in many circumstances convey information to both parties, and alternately adapt to and adopt the adversarial cultures. Thus, they epitomise those that

56 cf. Pym, Anthony, *op.cit*., p.30

57 Schleiermacher, Friedrich *Ueber der Verschiedenen Methoden des Uebersezens* (Edição Bilingue) Elementos Sudoeste, 2003. Translation by Susan Bernofsky in Venuti, Lawrence (ed.) *The Translation Studies Reader, 2nd edition* Routledge, New York, 2004, p.58*: "One must be loyal to one language or another, just as to one nation, or else drift dis-oriented in an unlovely in-between realm"*

Pym claims inhabit an inter-culture and that is perhaps the key as to why they were disenfranchised by political historians, especially in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, who after all, were mostly interested in proclaiming the superiority of their native culture over those that they had "discovered" and were unable to classify these middlemen as either friend to be celebrated or foe to be vilified.

Many in fact deliberately lived in this interculture, rather like chameleons adapting to their environment, with dual or even multiple cultural identities, for the purposes of material benefit or even their very survival. Such inconsistency is reflected in their historical treatment: opinions on their personal and moral integrity as well as their competence in performing their tasks vary considerably and are highly subjective, according to who utters them and what the objective of that utterance is, as Alonso warned us. Those that have received the greatest attention and renown are perhaps the exception to the rule, the elite who warranted the spotlight for unswerving loyalty or who (and this argument is far less enticing for the proponents of a glorious past for interpreting) stood out for some other reason than their actual tasks of linguistic mediation.

Indeed, these waters have not been clearly separated so far. As Pym suggests, translators are not just translators and in particular, in the context of the *Estado da Índia* the activities undertaken by the *lingoas* went far beyond the boundaries of any language profession as currently defined. One can, nevertheless, also give some credence to Bouchon's opinion that interpreters were "*personnages très épisodiques, très présents aux moments cruciaux d'une négociation"*[58] if this statement is understood to mean that rather than this being their primary activity, it was their intervention as interpreters that was very sporadic. Thus, on this basis, one could defend that certain characters have acquired prominence in spite of the fact that they were linguistic mediators.

This is where the danger lies: when delving into translation history, certain

58 Bouchon, Geneviève *Pionniers Oubliés: Les Interprètes Portugais en Asie dans les Premières Années du XVI siècle* in *Inde Découverte, Inde Retrouvée 1498-1630,* Comissão Nacional para os Descobrimentos Portugueses, Lisbon-Paris.

renowned political historians have failed to move beyond an unqualified eulogy of interpreting talents. Praise or favouritism was not heaped upon certain *lingoas* by their paymasters for what we would expect and what such authors have appeared to understand: their ability to faithfully transpose a message from one language to another. On the contrary, they were impressed with the way in which their overriding interests were served by these intermediaries – the results in terms of business deals; the information secretly obtained about enemy forces. Moreover, references to interpreting performances *per se,* the claims of linguistic skills were frequently made by the practitioners themselves and have been swallowed without being chewed. This is why we suggest that a new assessment is required, combining careful de-construction and a method for the history of oral translation, which seeks to address specific questions rather than merely draw a conclusion as to its being either good or bad.

Our interest therefore lies not in the episodic, but in the establishment of patterns of behaviour, or norms, without which, to borrow the terms used by Pym[59], this archaeological approach is transformed into little more than good storytelling. Hence when we refer to the need to answer more specific questions, what we are really proposing is to move from asking who did it to how they came to do it, what exactly did they do and why did it happen in this way. For this purpose, we are convinced that smaller boxes are required: today, there are very clear distinctions between different types of interpreting and no serious study of contemporary interpreting would consider conference and community interpreting to function according to the same norms. Each of these broad domains are subsequently broken down into techniques (consecutive; simultaneous; whispered; dialogue) or settings (diplomatic; court; public service; health; religious) each with their own set of premisses; traditions; power relations between interpreters and speakers; training programmes and skills sets *inter alia* and are thus analysed differently, with scholars specialising in teaching and research in just one of the domains, without necessarily ever crossing into others. Thus, in our opinion, setting the boundaries on a historical study of interpreting by defining a specific period of history in a certain geographical area or context is a good starting point, but within this goalposts, interpreting cannot be considered as one single phenomenon with just one set

59 Cf.Pym, Anthony, op. cit. p.7

of norms and one system.

The three essential interpreting contexts proposed by Bowen et al.[60] (war and peace; exploration and conquest, and evangelisation) are a most useful starting point, but we must not consider interpreting as being static: it has changed and evolved and not even in today's world with much greater regulation can we claim that types of interpreting are hermetic. Bowen's proposal corresponds by and large to the activities in the period and context under review, but we must add trade to this list, which after all was one of the five original objectives of the Discoveries and increasingly got the upper hand in the sixteenth century, and perhaps re-shape it slightly to raise the profile of diplomatic interpreting, that is to say linguistic and cultural mediation within the framework of embassies sent to local rulers, and not just interpreting in peace negotiations (which was indeed one of the earliest areas of mediation involving the Portuguese that we know of). In any case, these authors appear to have limited the scope of interpreting to oral transposition of messages from one language to another, which is the modern-day definition of what an interpreter does, but we would defend that interpreting in the period of the Portuguese Discoveries encompassed many more activities which are now considered separately: acting as guide; messenger; commercial agent; peace broker, to cite but a few examples, and even so, they had a different meaning in previous centuries to the one they have now.

Some interpreters worked on ships in the context of the exploration of new lands; others worked for the military forces or at least in situations of conflict and negotiation. One area of activity was linked to the Portuguese overseas administration; customs and taxation; commerce, whilst another was conversion to and preaching of the Christian faith, which we must not forget was also among the original objectives of the overall undertaking. The system could have been viewed quite differently, in terms of objectives and not broken down into individual components of which linguistic and cultural mediation was just one, for example: the Jesuits' objective was to convert and for that they needed a member of the Society who knew the doctrine; the prayers and could perform christenings and someone who could call the villagers to come and meet

60 Cf. Bowen, M. et al., op. cit.

the priest; have them sit down in orderly fashion; convince them to listen, and then explain his words in their language, adapting them to make the concepts accessible; answering questions directly and lastly assisting in the christenings, before undertaking the lengthier task of contributing to written translation of the doctrine. It was the set of tasks that this "assistant" for want of a better word performed that would determine the skills and characteristics that would be required of him. Hence it was on the basis of these requirements and expectations and the results achieved (which could have little or nothing to do with the way in which he carried out his duties, but could have simply been determined by target culture factors) that his performance would be assessed, primarily by the priest for his is the voice that has gone down in history. We shall observe similar sets of tasks for the other branches of interpreting during this period, each with their own skills requirements and intended results, and that in certain circumstances, the skills set was far from being circumscribed to technical competence.

This classification of linguistic and cultural mediation into certain branches is crucial for us to understand the power that interpreters had in different situations: Couto among others have claimed that interpreters working for the leading figures of the Portuguese administration gained power through knowing State and personal secrets; Bouchon believes power stems from the privileged viewpoint of knowing both cultures, but we would argue that it also depends on the outcomes desired and the balance of power between the interlocutors: in military situations, the Portuguese were interested in gaining an advantage and had little concern for the well-being of the other party; in religious settings, the European priests would seek to attract and persuade. Thus, at various levels, we become aware of the need to understand the different dynamics in which the interpreters were involved, and by so doing, we shall be able to draw a parallel with the way in which we consider interpreting to be organised in our times. Nowadays, it is highly specialised and compartmentalised, with each subset of professionals highly conscious of their specificities, thus we would be doing a great injustice to our forebears if we were to consider them as all alike. Moreover, systems were not perennial: interpreters and interpreting were necessarily diverse and nothing if not dynamic, for they undoubtedly evolved along with the developing aims of the Portuguese and their interaction with people from other continents. We risk trying to simplify multiple and complex systems, yet the historical; geographical and linguistic

affinities; the overlapping of spheres and contrast in approaches should render such a comparison fruitful.

CHAPTER TWO

LIVING IN THE SPACE BETWEEN – INTERPRETERS IN THE PORTUGUESE DISCOVERIES

2.1 EARLY FORMS OF CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC MEDIATION IN PORTUGAL

The personal profiles; status and system of rewards; roles and functions; knowledge and training, and working conditions of interpreters during the course of history had very little to do with the situation of the profession today. As far as Portugal is concerned, we can trace back interpreter activity to before the establishment of the country as an independent kingdom in the twelfth century and the completion of the Reconquest in the mid-thirteenth century with the conquest of Faro in the Algarve. Although since that time, Portugal's mainland borders have remained relatively unchanged, during the two centuries of the Reconquest its borders were in constant flux and it was within the context of the military campaigns that there was an intense interaction between different language groups.

The conquering forces were Christians who spoke Galician-Portuguese, whereas the occupiers were Moslems who spoke Arabic (also the language of culture) and Berber. They had invaded and quickly settled the Iberian Peninsula in 711, but throughout the period of Reconquest, in the South there was still a sizeable Christian community that spoke Romance languages, that at the same time were also quite different to the language of the re-conquerors[61]. Thus, until Galician-Portuguese took hold, there were other linguistic groups living in Portugal, such as the Arabs or Moors and the Mozarabs (the Christian communities that had lived under the Moorish

61 Teyssier, Paul *História da Língua Portuguesa* Livraria Sá de Costa, p.3

occupation).

Presumably, there must have been people who acted as intermediaries thanks to their knowledge of more than one language, but further research is required to trace accounts of interpreters having played a role in the daily communication between them. The merchants belonging to mudejar[62] communities, who continued to live in Portugal officially until the end of the fifteenth century, traded regularly in North Africa. Not only was Arabic their liturgical language, but until the reign of João I (1385-1433), its use in legal documents was also permitted in the Moslem communes.[63] Even after the order to convert or face expulsion was given in 1496, some continued to secretly practice their religion. Moslems and Christians thus co-existed for several centuries in what is now Portugal, as did the Portuguese and Arabic languages.[64] This co-existence and knowledge of languages, particularly Arabic, was to prove important during the Portuguese Age of Discoveries in which Portugal came into contact with many other peoples who also had a knowledge of Arabic, as a result of the vast trading network in the Indian Ocean region, but was insufficient to resolve many of the communication problems that explorers and later the imperial administration encountered and which will be one of the topics addressed hereunder.

The first encounters for the Portuguese were of course with their cohabitants of the Iberian peninsula, namely with the Moors from the start of the Reconquest, and subsequently with the Castillians, in particular during the struggle to maintain national independence, prior to their maritime voyages to North Africa. Both were hostile encounters, in which the main direct contacts would not have been around a negotiating table but on or in the spatial or temporal proximity of the battlefield, thus the tasks and roles that mediators played must be assessed in this light.

Similar contacts between Christians and Moslems were of course occurring in other

62 Mudejar is the term used to designate Moslem communities that remained in the Iberian Peninsula during the Reconquest and which did not convert to Christianity.

63 cf. Lopes de Barros, Maria Filomena *A Comuna Muçulmana de Lisboa*, Hugin, Lisboa 1998.

64 Cf Couto, Dejanirah *Quelques Observations sur les Rénégats Portugais en Asie du XVI siècle* in Mare Liberum, vol. 16.

parts of Europe and the Near East in the same era, through the Crusades. Several authors, such as Bowen and Roland, have raised the issue of the need for interpreters during these ventures, both for communication within armies comprising soldiers from different nations and for contacts with the enemy and his conversion to Christianity. Within the Portuguese context, Dias Farinha[65] points out that *alfaqueques* had negotiated the release of prisoners during the Reconquest and become especially important in this role, following the conquest of Ceuta (1415), as the number of prisoners-of-war increased by virtue of the intensification of conflicts. We should note in addition that the activity of *alfaqueques*, which has frequently been considered one of the primitive forms of linguistic and cultural mediation was especially long-lived, spanning several centuries. Moreover, *alfaqueques* were used by both sides to negotiate the release of Christians and Moors respectively. What we find particularly intriguing is that this role was sometimes assigned by the Portuguese to mudejar magistrates from the Lisbon Moslem commune. A first example is Adela, who having obtained the release of Moorish prisoners held in Portugal was granted safe-conduct by the King to escort them back to North Africa. In a second instance, João I instructed Mafamede de Avis to negotiate the exchange of Moorish prisoners belonging to the King for Christians held in North Africa and to also undertake a diplomatic mission to Granada to hand over two captives. *Alfaqueques* obviously had to venture into enemy territory to undertake their mission, but were recognised as official diplomatic envoys and thus their safety was largely guaranteed: as late as 1472, there is a record of Afonso V having granted a safe-conduct to the *alfaqueque* of Moley Xeque to also negotiate the release of prisoners held by Portugal.[66]

Several Portuguese translation historians ranging from Castilho Pais to Rocha and Casadinho have referred to the statutory code drawn up the Alphonse X of Castile between 1256 and 1265, the Siete Partidas[67], which sets out the requisite qualities for performing the function of Alfaqueque, including not just knowledge of Arabic, but also what could be succinctly summarised as noble birth and diplomatic tact. We would

65 Dias Farinha, António *História de Mazagão durante o Período Filipino,* Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, Lisboa 1970.

66 cf. Lopes de Barros, op. cit. pp.99-103

67 Translated into Portuguese by order of King Dinis (1279-1325)

argue that the function pre-dates the code, in Portugal at least, for the nation was founded in 1143 and over the course of the intervening century, Portuguese and Moors were engaged in an interminable military campaign as the Christian forces slowly extended their control further South and East, with some reverses along the way. The *Siete Partidas* could thus be viewed as an attempt to regulate the activity and as a response to the experience gained, but as seen from the examples above, it is misleading to assert that only Christians could be *alfaqueques* or alternatively that the Castilian code was implemented in the nascent Portuguese nation.

What is especially curious, though, is the trust shown in mudejar and even Moorish *alfaqueques* by the Portuguese crown, reflected in the degree of autonomy attributed them in the two missions described, for as we shall see during the course of our study, the prevailing attitude of the Portuguese towards linguistic and cultural mediators was one of mistrust, in particular, towards those of different faiths. In these cases, however, the King of Portugal entrusted the fate of Portuguese nobles held captive by the enemy to Moslems. It is certainly not far-fetched to suggest that the long cohabitation of Moors and Portuguese had produced this trust on a personal level, as the cultures of the two peoples became intertwined, or that such a mission would simply be less dangerous for a Moslem than a Christian, (although safe passage appears to have been provided in any case for the Moslem *alfaqueques* coming from North Africa). Undoubtedly, fluency in Arabic would have been a key requisite in determining the bearer of such a mission, but the Kings of Portugal always had nobles at Court who were able to speak the language. The difference in attitude, therefore, could lie in the fact that the mudejar community had been dominated and therefore was no longer the competitor that had to be destroyed, whereas Moslem communities outside Portugal were a very real and serious threat to the objectives of the Discoveries.

However, as Portugal's ambitions changed from reconquest and defence of the realm to expansion; knowledge and trade, so the main purposes of linguistic; cultural and diplomatic intermediaries and their characteristics altered. In this regard, Castilho Pais refers to the role of interpreter as a source of information, vital for the success of her undertaking:

> *"EI término lengua posee como referente no sólo al intérprete competente en dos o más lenguas, sino también a áquel que proporciona a los portugueses informaciones sobre geografía, gentes, costumbres y riquezas locales de las zonas de los descubrimientos."*[68]

We can trace back the origin of the Portuguese word *lingoa*[69] to before the Discoveries, with one of the first instances of its use in a document having appeared in the *Crónica do Condestável de Portugal Dom Nuno Álvares de Pereira* or *Coronica do Condestabre.* This chronicle, written between 1431 and 1443[70], recounts the expeditions led by the military commander to stop Castile from invading (and conquering) Portugal in the 1380's. When preparing for battle, he sends two squires to look for a *língua:*

> *"E como o conde estabre chegou a Tomar mandou três escudeiros: uu que fosse dizer a el rei de Castela (...) e os outros dous fossem para veer se poderiam haver algua lingoa."*[71]

Thus, the initial meaning of this word appears to be *informant* rather than *interpreter* for an essential component of a mediated act is that two entities are involved. In this case, the Portuguese are not interested in communicating with the enemy but in obtaining information. Moreover, it is not clear if the *lingoa* could speak Castilian or not and given the proximity between the two languages, it would hardly have been a prerequisite in order to be in possession of such information. There are also plenty of other instances in fifteenth-century and early sixteenth-century works about the

68 Castilho Pais, op. cit. p.34. Our translation: "The term *lengua* (Portuguese: *lingoa)* refers not only to the interpreter competent in two or more languages, but also he who provides the Portuguese with information about the local geography; peoples; customs and resources in the areas of the Discoveries."

69 This word appears in various spellings in fifteenth and sixteenth century documents, including *lingua; lingoa;* and *limguoa.*

70 cf. Machado de Faria, António (ed.) *Crónica do Condestável de Portugal Dom Nuno Álvares de Pereira* or *Coronica do Condestabre*, Academia Portuguese de História, 1972.

71 Idem, p. 136. Our translation: "And when the Warden of the Kingdom reached Tomar he sent out three squires: one to tell the King of Castille (…) and the other two went to see if they could get a *lingoa*."

Portuguese discoveries, in which the meaning of *lingoa* is clearly *informant* or *source of information* and not *interpreter.* . We refer to Galvão's *Tratado dos Descobrimentos:*

> "*No anno de 1434, mãdou o Ifante dõ Anrique Afonso gonçaluez baldaya, capitam de hu nauio, & Gilianes que descobrio o cabo em outro cabo alem delle, saydos em terra conhecerã ser pouoada, & como sabiam q ho Infante desejaua auer della lingua forã ter a hua põta sem ver nenhua cousa"*[72]

Obviously, in this example, the ability to communicate in another language would have been important, for we are referring here to a native of North West Africa, whose native tongue would not have been intelligible to the Portuguese. Yet again, the objective is definitely not to find someone who can act as linguistic and cultural mediator, but to inform directly. We would consider this a relevant change of perspective, for scholars have almost unanimously considered the word *lingoa* to be a synonym for interpreter, but if we consider it to have been in that era first and foremost a synonym of information or indeed the purveyor of that information, consequently, we should not consider these figures to have been interpreters who also carried out a whole series of other activities including spying missions[73], but rather informants or guides, who as a result of their linguistic and cultural skills also acted on occasions as interpreters, when communication between two different linguistic groups came to be required. In other words, there has been a tendency to place mediation centre-stage when it can be plausibly argued that it was a peripheral role in contemporary minds and so we have fallen into the trap described by Foz as "trying to make it happen".[74] We shall also discover that many others who worked as interpreters had a range of other unconnected activities.

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72 Galvão, António *Tratado dos Descobrimentos* Livraria Civilização, Porto 1944, p.124. Our translation: "In the year 1434, Prince Henry sent Afonso Gonçalves Baldaya, captain of a ship, and Gil Eanes, who discovered the Cape (Bojador) to another cape beyond that one. When they went ashore, the saw that the land was populated, and as they knew that the Prince wanted to obtain information about it, they went to a point, without seeing anything."

73 cf. Couto, Dejanirah, op. cit.

74 Foz, Clara *op. cit.*, p.134.

By considering the *lingoa* primarily as an informant, it is easier to understand the Portuguese attitude towards him. His overriding characteristic was to give away secrets, albeit enemy ones, rather than his knowledge of languages and cultures, for the Portuguese wished to discover not only new lands but also new things, in particular, new sources of wealth. Therefore, the origins of those who were to perform linguistic and cultural mediation are shrouded in negative connotations; they are considered to be traitors and mistrusted, even despised by the Portuguese. Our chronicler (who is anonymous, but likely to have been a member of Pereira's household) implies that although a compatriot, the *lingoa* had sided with the Castilians and was captured and harassed by the squires:

> *"e foi-se aos Olivaes onde achou os escudeiros e a língoa que traziam, aa qual pôs grandes medos, pero lhe disse que lhe perdoava e que lhe dissesse a verdade."*[75]

He comes from the ranks of the *"arrenegados"*, those ready to fight for the enemy, a figure, according to Lima Cruz, engrained in the Portuguese conscience[76], as can be seen through the description of the 1383 to 1385 war against the Castilians in Camões' poem, the Lusiads.[77]

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75 Machado da Faria, *op. cit.* p.136. Our translation: "And he went to Olivaes where he found the squires and the informant they had brought with them, who they had greatly scared, but to whom he said he would forgive him and to tell him the truth."

76 cf. Lima Cruz, Maria Augusta *Degredados e Arrenegados Portugueses no Espaço Índico, nos Primórdios do Sec. XVI* in *Dimensões da Alteridade nas Culturas de Língua Portuguesa – O outro, 1º Simpósio Interdiscipilinar de Estudos Portugueses, Actas vol.I,* Departamento de Estudos Portugueses, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e *Humanas*, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1987

77 First printed in 1572.

English translation by Robert Duff (1879), publ. Lewtas, M. Lisbon, Song IV Verse 32:

And frowning brow to brow his brothers stood,
(A sad and cruel sight!), which could not shake
His soul, for 'tis no crime to shed the blood
Of nearest kinsmen, who their king forsake.
And on their country shameful warfare make:

She points out that the word *"arrenegado"*, did not just have the contemporary meaning of an apostate, but was rather a traitor, someone who had abandoned their fatherland. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, there were numerous occasions on which renegade Portuguese soldiers working as mercenaries for local chiefs in Asia, also acted as intermediaries. To a certain extent, they had abandoned their original cultural identity and assumed another, often that of the direct enemy of their compatriots, acquired the language skills and cultural insight necessary for this role, but were of course, regarded with mistrust or loathed by the Portuguese as they had put their own material interests above their loyalty to Portugal and God. In fact, though, they were self-seekers, for they did not exercise loyalty to either one side or the other, but at different moments in their military careers would cross the divide, or even within the same operation or conflict act as double agents, to maximise their own personal gain.

Lima Cruz points to sieges, which were common during the first decades of the Portuguese presence in India, as they built many fortresses to establish strongholds on Indian soil, as the situation par excellence for these renegades to act as double agent spies. They would use the knowledge they had of the Portuguese to inform their new masters of the weak points to attack, but at the same time would use subtle methods to convey important information to the Portuguese officers, so they would be prepared to repel the enemy onslaught. Some of these messages would be conveyed directly, that is to say orally, when they acted as messenger interpreters, by introducing sentences with double meanings into what they were saying, or they would wrap written messages around stones and hurl them into the fortress, or other similar stratagems. [78]

Those who knew languages, therefore, could have acquired their linguistic skills through their very betrayal of Portugal. Apostasy was frequent on both sides during the

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But many renegades were not ashamed
A part 'gainst friends, and relatives to take
In civil war (vile conduct ever blamed),
As in that dreadful one which Julius erst proclaimed.

78 cf. Lima Cruz, op. cit.

Reconquest, as a result of the changing borders between Christian and Moslem domains, and renegade Christians would join Moorish militia[79]. The renegade soldier as an intermediary and informant (as opposed to the minor nobles who had learned Arabic while held captive in North Africa) provides us with a good example of the many and diverse figures who as bridges between two groups, the "discoverers" and the "discovered", hovered in a space between them, often mistrusted by both for fear of being disadvantaged by them, whilst in the modern profession of interpreting, strict neutrality is a non-negotiable prerequisite. It is this suspicion that characterised the Portuguese attitude towards linguists during the Discoveries and beyond.

There were a whole myriad of linguistic intermediaries working for the Portuguese, as their services were in constant demand upon every vessel; to accompany every Embassy; at every trading post and at the majority of sermons delivered by the evangelising religious orders in the Indian Ocean region and the Far East, and whose activities went far beyond oral linguistic mediation.

Throughout the period, both in the Crusades and the Portuguese exploration of the Orient, the main focus of interpreting needs was of course for Arabic, a *lingua franca* from North Africa to the Indian Ocean, and other Oriental languages, yet scholars in these fields were generally in short supply, as brought to the Council of Vienna'a attention in 1311-12. With a view to training more missionaries for Islamic lands, five chairs were founded in Rome, Bologna, Paris, Oxford and Salamanca for instruction in Arabic, Hebrew and Chaldean.[80]

As Bouchon points out, however, the Arabic scholars who had studied at Salamanca were employed to translate Court correspondence but did not take part in the arduous sea voyages or overland expeditions as interpreters, a task which, whenever possible, the Portuguese preferred to bestow on men who had proved their valour and resilience in the difficult circumstances in which they had learned the language itself, in captivity in North Africa, for example, having been taken prisoner by the enemy and

79 Cf Couto, op. cit. pp 63-65.

80 Cf Roland, op. cit. p.33

who had not shifted their allegiance nor renounced their religion during their plight and because they would in many cases be required to spend a long period if not the rest of their lives in the conquered territory.[81] Moreover, we have to admit that they would be recruited primarily to serve in the military campaigns and that linguistic mediation was a secondary function. It also avoided having to rely on the Other, the Moor, (used here in the broad sense to mean *Islamised* in keeping with Zurara's *Crónica da Guiné).* Over four centuries of Moorish occupation of Portugal and their continued presence in Andalusia had made Moslems the eternal enemy, on the other side of a huge cultural, linguistic and religious divide. In fact, any intermediary who could not provide impeccable credentials of patriotism was immediately the focus of suspicion for knowing the language of the enemy implied having had some sort of previous interaction and perhaps collusion with him.

Meanwhile, the Council of Vienna's initiative would never have alleviated the shortage of suitable candidates for interpreter in the Discoveries, for as Rocha states[82] the skills required by translators (erudition and mastery of written language, more suited to the dedication of monks) were quite different from those sought in interpreters (adaptability; astuteness and the ability to speak and understand the vernacular). Those with the ideal profile were always in short supply, and consequently, the Portuguese constantly sought more linguistic mediators and were often obliged to use the services of those that they considered less than ideal. This was to prove to be a major concern during the Portuguese expansion.

2.2 DISCOVERING INTERPRETERS

The Portuguese African Empire was born in 1415, with the Conquest of Ceuta. It was in the aftermath of battles with the Moors there, that the aforementioned *alfaqueques* came into play, as the first linguistic and cultural mediators of the

81 Bouchon, Geneviève *Pionniers Oubliés: Les Interprètes Portugais en Asie dans les Premières Années du XVI siècle* in *Inde Découverte, Inde Retrouvée 1498-1630,* Comissão Nacional para os Descobrimentos Portugueses, Lisbon-Paris 1999

82 cf. Rocha, op. cit. p.76

Portuguese Expansion, to negotiate the release of captives. Even though, as we have pointed out, Mudejars could be used, the Portuguese had sufficient compatriots with a knowledge of Arabic to carry out this delicate task, which required appointment by the King. The Portuguese are also credited with having initiated a novel and deliberate policy to recruit interpreters for their voyages, but there are differing versions as to when exactly and by whom this was started: Roland, with woeful inaccuracy, claims the Portuguese had anticipated the language barrier to their quests as early as 1411, claiming that António Gonçalvez, had seized some West Africans and sent them back to Portugal to learn Portuguese and was thus the *"first European to capture locals and take them back to the mother country to be trained as interpreters"*.[83]

Quite apart from the voyage having taken place in 1441 and been led by Antão Gonçalves, according to Gomes Eanes da Zurara, the royal chronicler, writing the official history between 1453 and 1464, the aim of capturing the first few natives taken by Gonçalves was for them to provide information about their land to Prince Henry the Navigator[84] and the subsequent group were to be enslaved or traded. The immediate aims of the Portuguese voyages were to set up a series of trading posts or factories along Africa's Atlantic seaboard in order to obtain gold and slaves and were hungry for information about the business prospects in each area. There are numerous references to natives being captured for slavery in Zurara's *Crónica da Guiné* which recounts voyages undertaken in the second quarter of the fifteenth century, so the usefulness of these slaves as interpreters later on was, in our opinion, just been a spin-off rather than an intentioned policy.

When Henry ordered them to be taught Portuguese, it was so he could extract information from them, as there was no-one in Portugal who could understand them. Even then, their role on a return voyage was first and foremost to act as a guide to locate the larger and more important settlements and subsequently to act as intermediaries in attempts to forge alliances with local leaders who would help them procure more slaves. The closest reference we located to training native Africans specifically to work as

83 Cf Roland, op.cit. p.80

84 Cf. Zurara, op. cit., p.73

interpreters comes from the *Relação do Reino do Congo (Account of the Kingdom of Congo)* by Rui de Pina. The context though is altogether different: some Christian interpreters were sent ashore to speak to the King whilst some Africans (nobles and princes) boarded the ships in safety.[85] The King spent a long time talking to the interpreters leading the Captain to think they had been taken to prisoner, so he set sail with the locals still on board, but promising the bystanders at the water's edge that he would return with them within fifteen months. They were then given to the King of Portugal, as friends and not prisoners, to learn the Portuguese language and culture, the Christian faith and aid the conversion of their compatriots upon their return:

> *"O dito Capitão dos navios entregou ao seu Rei estes negros, não como prisioneiros mas como amigos, para que aprendessem os hábitos e a língua do Reino durante aquele tempo pelo empenho e cuidado do Rei para que depois de regressados à pátria, aquela bestial nação bem e amestrada através da doutrina e virtude daqueles negros que regressaram connosco mais facilmente pudessem ser convertidos e compreendidos."*[86]

According to Pina, they were treated most humanely, bearing in mind their status in their native land and did indeed return at the promised time, for the purposes of facilitating trade and evangelisation. Whilst Pina does not give us an exact date for these events, he indicates that they took place in the reign of King John II and that the King of Congo was converted in 1489, hence we can conclude that they occurred at some point in the mid-1480's. This episode is undoubtedly worthy of inclusion in our study as an example a means of procuring interpreters, but is quite unrelated to any supposed policy

85 Or as insurance? Only an Italian translation of the original manuscript survives, raising some doubts of interpretation.

86 Radulet, Carmen M. *O Cronista Rui de Pina e a "Relação do Reino do Congo"* Imprensa Nacional, 1992. Our translation: "The said ships' captain handed these Negroes over to the King, not as prisoners but as friends, in order to learn the habits and the language of the Kingdom during that time through the King's interest and attention so that when they returned to their country, that savage nation well instructed through the doctrine and virtue of the Negroes who had returned with us could more easily be converted and understood."

or practice in the light of the circumstances in which it occurred; the era; the purposes of such training, and the status of the future interpreters and their relationship with the Portuguese, including King John II with whom they conversed frequently.

Not only were the Portuguese pioneers in the age of Discoveries, but also as their mariners ventured further and further afield with each new voyage, they came into contact with new civilisations, firstly the peoples of North West Africa; then the Gulf of Guinea and later, the peoples of East Africa, the Gulf, India and the Far East, covering a vast area within the space of fifty or sixty years. Many of these lands had held a great curiosity for Europeans for some time, whilst others were quite unknown and thus, in both cases, the Portuguese were anxious to establish communication with them with a view to reporting back to the Prince. In order to understand how such communication was approached, we must recall the anthropological discourse in force at the time of the voyages of Discovery.

The Portuguese, in this the first wave of the Renaissance lasting, according to Barreto[87], until the 1530's or 1540's, were ethno- or Eurocentric; they characterised the inhabitants of the lands they came into contact with as pagans or Moslems. Pagans were neutral or non-Moslem and could be classified on the basis of his differences vis-à-vis the Portuguese. Moslems were the opposite or the anti-me, as religion was the prevalent indicator of identity. The pagans were inferior beings and in need of salvation through conversion to the Christian faith, whereas the Moslems were the enemy to be destroyed. The sentiments of the Other varied, but were often characterised by erecting barriers rather than the building of bridges that the Portuguese aspired to: on several occasions, locals would create obstacles to keep these foreign visitors at bay, through fear or at times with the main purpose of preventing cultural approximation. Horta claims that the Africans associated the Portuguese with spirits, as they came from the sea and had white skin, and were regarded with awe.[88]

87 cf. Barreto, Luis Filipe *Descobrimentos e Renascimento, Formas de Ser e Pensar nos Séculos XV e XVI*, Imprensa Nacional, 1983, p.108.

88 Horta, José da Silva *A Imagem dos Africanos pelos Portugueses antes dos Contactos* in Alburquerque et al. (ed.) *O Confronto dos Povos na Época das Navegações Portuguesas*, Caminho, Lisboa.

In the early sixteenth century, the extremely ethnocentric Chinese punished those who brought foreigners to their land with death (the interpreters to the first Portuguese expedition met this fate, as we shall see below) and resisted requests for audiences with the Emperor through delaying tactics and strict rules of protocol; the Negus (the Prester John of stories that had been circulating for over three centuries in Europe, but whose exact identity and location had remained elusive) was never visible to the Portuguese explorers in the expedition led by Dom Rodrigo de Lima, but remained either in a separate tent or behind a screen; Vasco da Gama was kept waiting behind a locked door before being allowed to meet the Samorim of Calicut and even then was only allowed to enter with just two other men (he chose Fernão Martins, his interpreter, as one of them), and the expedition to Gaur (Gauda) in 1521 had to pass through a dozen heavily-guarded gates before reaching the King:

> *"Chegando a esta porta que eu digo, vêo a nós um homem fidalgo que era guarda principal del rei, ao qual nos entregou o regedor que nos trazia. E depois de sêrmos entregue(s) a este, fomos buscados todos até os cabelos se leva(va)mos algumas armas....*
>
> *Chegamos à segunda porta e fomos buscados como na prima; e passamos por esta e por outras até nove, e em todas fomos buscados."*[89]

Faced with such defensiveness, prior knowledge and observance of cultural norms was vital for achieving the desired interview or information concerning trading opportunities. Each new encounter was a high point of danger as the differences between the two groups were clearly visible and could trigger aggressive reactions: not

89 Bouchon, G. & Thomaz, L.F. ed., *Voyage dans les Deltas du Gange et de l'Irraouaddy (1521)*, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1988. cf. Items 40 to 42. Our translation. "When we reached this door I speak of, a nobleman who was the King's chief guard came to us and the clerk who brought us handed us over to him. And after we had been handed over to him, we were searched to our hair to see if we were carrying weapons.... We reached the second door and were searched as at the first; and we went through this door and up to another nine, and were searched at all of them."

just the colour of their skin; their clothes or lack of them, but also their weapons; their vessels and sailing arts. Such situations did not become less dangerous as the Portuguese pursued their exploration and their reputation for taking slaves and somewhat ruthless behaviour preceded them, exacerbated by myth and the demonisation of the Other:

> *"Depois tentámos vir à fala com esses negros: e tanto pelos nossos turgimãos pedimos e gritámos, que uma daquelas almadias se aproximou de nós, um tiro de arco: aos homens da qual fizemos perguntar por que razão nos atacavam, isto porque nos éramos gente de paz, e dispostos a fazer trato de mercadorias;... A sua resposta foi que, pelo nosso passado, tinham obtido algumas notícias do nosso practicar com os negros de Senega... porque, eles tinham, por certo, que nós, Cristãos, comíamos carne humana, e que só comprávamos negros para os comer;"* [90]

Whilst China was a source of fascination for Europeans, accounts of the first Portuguese Embassy to the Imperial authorities led by Tomé Pires reveal how introverted the Chinese were: they had no word in their language for Portugal or the Portuguese and only a very vague idea of where Portugal was, situating it in the Territory of the West, that is to say anywhere in Europe. They had never seen people with such large noses and for a Korean observer, the Portuguese looked like the Japanese and they had a very strange diet[91]. Hearsay also abounded, with Chinese

90 Peres, Damião (ed.) *Viagens de Luís de Cadamosto e de Pedro de Sintra*, Academia Portuguesa de História, 1988, p.154 Our translation: "We tried to get to speak to these Negroes: and through our interpreters we called and shouted so much that one of the pirogues came to within an arrow shot of us: we asked the men aboard it why they attacked us, when we were men of peace, and ready to trade goods with them;... Their answer was that, from our past, they had learned how we had dealt with the Negroes of the Senega... because they were quite sure that we, Christians, ate human flesh, and that we only bought Negroes to eat them;"

91 cf.Jin Guo Ping and Wu Zhiliang, *Uma Embaixada com dois Embaixadores – novos dados orientais*

sources also accusing the Portuguese embassy of abducting small children and eating them.

Even though religion was vitally important for the Portuguese for determining the motives and character of the other party, some rather glaring mistakes could be made: a contemporary Chinese account informs us that Tomé Pires read Buddhist books, whilst the Portuguese, eager to find the elusive kingdom of Prester John, were repeatedly enticed into believing that they were encountering Eastern Christians. As Aubin has pointed out, communication difficulties helped to create these untruths. It was actually Vasco da Gama's interpreter, Fernão Martins, who helped created this confusion in Calicut. The Portuguese believed they had found a church, especially when the Moslem intermediaries[92] used the word, "quasee" or "caciz" to designate the temple priests. Martins heard "quafes" and mistook it for "kafirs" a non-believer or Christian, a word he had learned during his captivity in North Africa.[93]

In fact, finding similarities in the Other was the essential path to de-constructing his alterity, a precondition for the Portuguese to pursue the objectives of their expansion with him: to trade and to evangelise, since the true antithesis was the Moslem, immune to Portuguese cultural transfer and the possibility of apostasy. Their immediate need was to establish a connection, however, prior to attempting verbal communication, the explorers would try to reduce the anthropological distance, (which could inadvertently provoke undesired hostility or rejection) by mimicking the actions of the Other, as if to force a mutual recognition of similarities, as described by Álvaro Velho in his diary of Vasco da Gama's voyage:

> *"E êles começaram logo de tanger quatro ou cinco flautas (...) e bailavam como negros. E o captião-mor mandou tanger as trombetas e nós, em os batéis, bailávamos e o capitão-mor de*

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sobre Tomé Pires e Hoja Yasan in Administração n.º 60, vol. XVI, 2003-2.º, 685-716

92 Not knowing the local language, Malayalam, the Portuguese could not communicate directly with the local Hindus, but had to speak in Arabic to Moslems present.

93 cf. Ed. Aubin, Jean *Voyages de Vasco da Gama, Relations des Expéditions de 1497-99 & 1502-03,* Editions Chandeigne, 1995

volta connosco." [94]

Communication through gestures, especially mimetism, could entice the natives to also show interest in establishing contact, as we can see from this episode recounted by Cadamosto:

> *"Quando estavam perto içaram um lençol branco, atado a um remo, como a pedir seguro. Nós respondemos-lhes daquele mesmo modo. E, vendo que tínhamos feito o mesmo, puseram-se de lado... e aqui começaram a olhar-nos como muito grande maravilha, vendo que éramos homens brancos."*[95]

Nevertheless, it would not provide the Portuguese with the depth of knowledge they sought of the foreign lands they visited. As they wished to set up trade relationships, communication with the Other had to move on to a different plane, the verbal one, if the divides were to be spanned. Thus, the idea of using natives who had spent several years in Portugal, during which time they had learned some Portuguese could have emerged as a means of establishing more parallels with the Other and facilitating their approaches. The strangeness of their white skin and the fear that it often induced in the African peoples could be attenuated by first presenting a member of a similar community, in order to establish their common humanity. In fact, they represent the first subjects of prolonged cultural interaction and dialogue to have taken place, albeit on Portuguese soil and not in Africa.[96]

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94 Fontoura da Costa, A. (ed.), *Roteiro da Primeira Viagem de Vasco da Gama, 1497-99 por Álvaro Velho*, Agência Geral do Ultramar, Lisboa 1960, p.11. Our translation: "And then they started to play on four or five pipes (…) and they danced like Negroes. And the Captain of the Fleet ordered trumpets to be played and we, in the skiffs, danced and the captain of the fleet with us."

95 cf. Peres, Damião, op. cit., p.172. Our translation: "When they were close to us, they hoisted a white cloth, tied to an oar, as if to plead for safety. We responded in the same manner. And, seeing that we had done the same, they drew up broadside... and they began to stare at us in amazement, seeing that we were white men."

96 cf. Oliveira e Costa, op. cit. pp.90-1.

The fact that such experiments were not always successful, a matter left largely untouched by many authors who have marvelled at the ingenuity of the Portuguese and indeed Spanish policy, can be attributed to the ethnocentricity of the times, exemplified by the innate Portuguese belief that the pagans were inferior beings. The captured natives would conceivably have adapted to the host society during their stay in Portugal, learning the language and absorbing the culture, but without wiping out the memories; habits, or beliefs that they were born with. So we see that inter-cultural encounters created what various authors claim to have been the first trained interpreters of the era. Malyn Newitt, for example, states that the Portuguese organised a system, whereby they taught Portuguese to Africans captured or bought in West Africa, with a view to their working as interpreters on ships or as intermediaries in trade deals.[97] However, they were not trained at all to be interpreters, but had originally been captured to provide information about their native lands to Henry the Navigator, so that he could assess their interest to his country's endeavours (that is to say, a one-way information transfer).[98]

The Portuguese also valued the opportunity of converting them and thus saving their soul, but only later on, did some of them adventitiously become useful as linguistic and cultural mediators. Furthermore, the situation of the ship's *truchement* was highly precarious and whilst relying on a pagan to undertake this role was a risk, it was a calculated one, for a captured African could guide the navigators and interpret local ways and customs for them, and was of course far more dispensable to the Portuguese than a brave knight, who had valiantly defended the honour of King and country and guarded his Christian faith even when languishing in a North African jail. So, from a very early stage, a hierarchy was set among these mediators and the tasks that they

97 Newitt, Malyn *The Origins of Portuguese Expansion 1400-1668*, Routledge, 2005 p.31

98 cf. Zurara, *Crónica da Guiné* p.66: Antão Gonçalves, who is credited with having captured the first Moors to take back to Portugal, states that he wants to capture them to collect knowledge: *"a mais pequena parte da vitória será filharmos algum, do qual o Infante nosso senhor não será pouco contente, para cobrar conhecimento por ele de quaes e quejandos são os outros moradores desta terra."* They are kept in Portugal for some time, but only an Arabic-speaking nobleman can provide any information as nobody in the realm can understand the language spoken by the remainder. Subsequently, Gonçalves returns to the same region, the *Rio do Ouro,* and trades the nobleman and two other captives for a greater number of black slaves, ten in all, with the deal having been struck by the Arabic-speaking Martim Fernandes, who was Prince Henry the Navigator's *alfaqueque.*

should be assigned, with the most dangerous being reserved for the least valued and vice-versa. By way of example, Vasco da Gama used a crew-member, Martim Afonso, as his interpreter on the inaugural voyage to India, but only sent him, rather than a slave-interpreter ashore to make contact with locals once he had assessed the level of danger and concluded that they were peaceful:

> *"E vendo Vasco da Gama que mostravam ser gente mansa, mandou subir em terra um dos nossos, chamado Martim Afonso, que sabia muitas linguas de negros"*[99]

One of the most successful expeditions for gathering information was that of the squire João Fernandes, who, as he spoke the language of the *Azenegues*[100], was sent in 1444 to explore the Western Sahara and spent seven months living among the nomadic tribes.[101] This is an early example of a Portuguese who went native, who gained sustained experience of another civilisation; adapted to their dress and diet; was cherished by them and as we shall discover below was rather unique in that he maintained his original allegiance, perhaps made possible by his social standing, and continued to serve his country.

For the most part, contact with another culture implied assimilation to the Other and so a reverse of Barreto's anthropological characterisation is performed[102]: this Other is defined by the differences and not the analogies to the Self, with the primordial aspects once again being religious and linguistic. As the era of Discoveries progressed, this process came to affect both the Portuguese who settled in Africa and the Africans taken to Portugal and who subsequently served as a cultural and linguistic mediator

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99 Azevedo, Pedro de (ed.) *Historia dos Descobrimentos e da Conquista da Índia pelos Portugueses por Fernão Lopes de Castanheda* Imprensa da Universidade, Coimbra, vol. I, ch. IV. p.14. Our translation: "And as Vasco da Gama saw that they showed themselves to be calm people, he sent one of our men ashore, called Martim Afonso, who knew many Negroes' languages."

100 Term used to describe the Berbers living between Rio de Oro and Senegal.

101 cf. Madeira Santos, Maria Emília *Viagens de Exploração Terrestre dos Portugueses em África* Centro de Estudos de Cartografia Antiga, Lisboa 1978 p.26

102 cf. Barreto,op. Cit., p.102

aboard ship. The latter, having been chosen to make the first approach upon arrival, ran a great risk, as he was the first to attempt to straddle the divide. He was a figure who was not the Other nor the Self: his knowledge of the language and cultural rites enabled him to penetrate the group (of Africans), yet at the same time, could not be identified as belonging to it, in view of the difference in his appearance and his attachment to the visitors. Even a local returning to his native land could conceivably no longer be unreservedly accepted by his fellow countrymen, for once he had crossed the divide, he could not cross back again without bringing differences and the fear of the unknown, of the Other. Entwined influences in the mediator aroused suspicion concerning his loyalty, as if he were a spy or agent for odious intentions, (which in many cases he was) and hence the imperative need to destroy him in order to re-establish the divide, for the Self is defined and protected through dissimilarities to the Other. This reaction was vividly described by Alvise Cadamosto in his diary of a 1455 voyage to the River Senegal delta:

> *"Ao qual turgimão foi cometido que se informasse da condição de essa terra, e sob que senhor estavam; e que soubesse se aí encontrava ouro e outras coisas que se comprassem.... Chegados a ele, falaram-lhe por espaço de pouco tempo: e do que eles disseram não tivemos notícia; só sabemos que com fúria, começaram a ferir este nosso turgimão negro com umas espaada mouriscas curtas, e em tão pouco tempo o mataram que os do barco não o puderam socorrer, pelo que, sabido por nós tal nova, ficámos estupefactos e atónitos; e compreendemos que estes deviam ser muito cruéis e que, tendo feito um tal acto naquele negro que era da sua raça, com mais razão, muito pior fariam a nós."*[103]

103 Peres, Damião (ed.) *Viagens de Luís de Cadamosto e de Pedro de Sintra*, Academia Portuguesa de História, 1988, p.148. Our translation: "The said interpreter was charged with gathering information about the land and its ruler, and if there was gold and other thiings that could be bought there..... When they (the Negroes) reached him, they spoke to him briefly; we do not know what they spoke of, only that in their fury, they started to wound our Negro interpreter with short, Moorish swords, and they killed him so quickly that those in the boat did not have time to come to his rescue; so that, when we found out about this, we were left astonished and dumbfounded; and we realised that

Cadamosto's conclusion at the end of this excerpt is obviously speculative, but reflects the crew's fears. They turned back, but when visiting the same area on a subsequent voyage, the explorers were certainly not attacked. The native Africans initially revealed a certain timidity and fear of their visitors, often keeping their distance, but when enticed closer by the playing of instruments or jigging, their interest and curiosity could be aroused, but rarely any outright animosity. When further communication proved impossible, they would simply drift away without any confrontation having occurred, in much the same way as Cadamosto ultimately did at the end of this voyage, when it became clear to him that the language barrier would prevent any further collection of information. We can therefore surmise that in the earlier expedition, the problem was indeed the interpreter (*turgimão*) either because of what he said or because he could no longer be clearly defined as a member of the group or as one of the Others.

On another occasion, the use of a mediator who had presumably been captured on an earlier voyage and subsequently learned the language whilst in service in Portugal had disastrous consequences. The episode concerning the tragic end of Gonçalo de Sintra in North-West Africa is narrated by Zurara in the *Crónica da Guiné*. It is important for us to remember that unlike Cadamosto, he did not witness this episode first hand. Zurara was in fact the royal chronicler who was charged with writing a triumphant history of the Portuguese feats of the preceding decades (1430's and 1440's) and used a manuscript written by Afonso Cerveira, the factor at the trading post in Benin, as his main source. We can surmise that Cerveira was not present on the voyage of Gonçalo de Sintra either. As a man of the fifteenth century, Zurara was typically religious and saw the commander of the Portuguese discoveries, Prince Henry the Navigator, as having been chosen by God to undertake his work.[104] Thus, Gonçalo de Sintra's downfall is precipitated by his disobedience of Henry's orders, which were to go straight to Guiné, but instead he stopped at Arguin in the hope of capturing some slaves.

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they were surely very cruel and that, having done such a thing to a Negro who was of the same race, they would be more likely to do much worse to us."

104 cf. Barreto, Luís Filipe *Descobrimentos e Renascimento* Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, 1983.

When he went ashore along with twelve of his men, they fell victim to a fatal ambush launched by their own interpreter:

> *"Gonçalo de Sintra levava um moço azenegue por torgimão, o qual já da nossa linguagem sabia grande parte (que lhe o Infante entregara) mandando que posesse nela boa guarda. E parece que por mingua de bom avisamento daqueles que dele tinham cuidado e principalmente do capitão, de que ao cargo devera ser maior, buscando o moço tempo e lugar para isso, despediu-se uma noite dentre eles e lançou-se com aqueles moradores da ilha, aos quaes deu novas de tudo o que sabia dos contrarios".*[105]

The use of such an interpreter backfired, for instead of providing the Portuguese with knowledge of the locals, he acted as informant to his countrymen and thus greatly weakened Gonçalo de Sintra's position. In addition to recounting the episode, the chronicler devotes an entire chapter to the lessons that can be learned from this setback. The fifth underlines the power purveyed by information (once again rendered by the term *lingua* but quite unrelated to the idea of linguistic mediation, which is an issue that will be discussed hereunder): *"A quinta, quando nossos inimigos certa lingua hão de nosso poder e vontade, devemo-nos muito guardar de fazer entrada em sua terra."*[106] The fact that the locals gained knowledge of the Portuguese purpose (to take slaves) explains their hostile reaction, in contrast to some of Cadamosto's experiences, whereby they merely distanced themselves. Another point of interest for us is the warning given in Zurara's second caution: to closely watch the prisoners who are then used as

105 Zurara, Gomes Eanes da *Crónica da Guiné,* ed. José de Bragança, Livraria Civilização, 1937, p. 134. Our translation: "Gonçalo de Sintra had taken a Berber boy, who already understood a lot of our language (and who the Prince had given him) as an interpreter, ordering him to keep a close eye on him. And it seems that through a lack of sound judgement of those who had taken care of him and in particular the captain, who due to his position should have known better, the boy found the right moment and place to run away from them one night and threw in his lot with the inhabitants of the island, to whom he told everything he knew of their adversaries."

106 Idem, p.137. Our translation: "The fifth, when our enemies have some knowledge of our power and intentions, we should be wary of going ashore on their land."

turgimões:

> *"A segunda, que no prisioneiro a refens, turgimães de terra alheia, sempre se deve de poer especial guarda, esguardando sobre eles com grande cautela. E os males que já disto aconteceram manifestos são"*[107].

The option of using captured slaves as interpreters is openly criticised, since not being of Portuguese stock, their loyalty cannot be taken for granted,. They can become traitors and perhaps even represent a Lucifer figure, as one who holds the key to their prize but who ultimately lures them away from their divinely determined path and to their doom[108].

Zurara's historiography may not seem credible by today's parameters (largely because of the way that he describes events in such detail as if he had witnessed them first hand, such as quoting certain characters extensively, when his knowledge was at best third-hand), but should be understood in its epoch and context. He must make his account lively, fast-paced and extract the salient points of interest for his audience. Unsurprisingly, references in the *Crónica da Guiné* to the subject of our study are secondary, for the author's purpose is to extol achievements and to show the superiority of Portuguese civilisation. The Others are never described other than in number or in terms of their belligerent capabilities, thus the overriding atmosphere is one of hostility and aggression rather than communication and cultural entente. In this context, the primary purpose of interaction is to obtain information (largely about the human and material resources of interest to the Portuguese to be conveyed to Henry the Navigator), rather than to enter into amicable dialogue. It is actually such information that is designated by the term *língua,* as is clearly demonstrated by the following passage attributed to Gil Eanes:

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107 Ibidem, p. 136. Our translation: The second, that the prisoner held hostage, interpreters from foreign lands, should always be placed under special guard, guarding them with great caution. And the ills that occurred from this are already well known."

108 cf. Barreto, op. cit.

> *"e ainda no regimento do Infante nosso senhor nos é mandado que nos não intrometamos dela senão com grande avisamento, e isto para vermos sómente se poderemos por algum caso saber a gente que há na ilha, e seu poder, se é tamanho como a ele é dito; eu diria que seria bem de irmos a ela, e poderá ser que nosso senhor Jesus Cristo, que sempre ajuda os que bem trabalham, ordenará de havermos dela alguma língua"*[109]

Obviously, this knowledge is obtained through a person, but the objective was not to take captives, they were merely the means to the end. We can establish a distinction between the meanings conveyed by *língua* and *turgimão* in Zurara's chronicle, when they have so often been treated as synonyms by historians, whereas they only converge later, before the term *turgimão* is actually supplanted by *língua* and *intérprete*. In these two accounts that we are analysing that pertain to mid-fifteenth century voyages, the two expressions provide important clues to the Portuguese attitude towards the native Africans, varying from aggression to cooperation.

Although we must not forget that Cadamosto's log was originally written in Italian, Zurara's chronicle uses the term *língua* more frequently than *turgimão* which is the more common reference in Cadamosto. Even though we have traced the first usage of *lingua* with this meaning back to before the start of the Discoveries, one would be inclined to ponder whether this term became much more frequent in the context of the voyages of exploration and thus other language groups without the same cultural experience did not develop a parallel term with the same etymological route. *Língua* appears in conjunction with conflicts; domination and superiority, such as in the following excerpt attributed to Martim Vicente, who advocates attacking the natives in view of the fact that the Portuguese are unlikely to obtain *língua:*

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109 cf. Zurara, op. cit. (ed. José de Bragança) pp. 113-4. Our translation: "And in the order of the Prince, Our Lord, we are told not to enter into it, other than with great heed, and only then to see if by chance we may be able to learn what people there are on the island, its power, if it is as big as is said: I would say that it would be good to go there, and perhaps Our Lord Jesus Christ, who always helps those who work well, will order that we gain some knowledge of it."

> "*Porem a mim parece e tal é meu conselho, se vós a isso derdes consentimento, que nos démos sobre estes Mouros emquanto são despercebidos, porque, por o desacordo que entre eles será por nossa chegada, eles são vencidos; e que aí al não aproveitarmos senão haver lingua, nós devemos disso ser contentes*."[110]

On Cadamosto's voyage, it appears that each of the vessels had its own *turgimão* on board and that their role is linked to establishing alliances with local leaders for trading purposes, hence the context is quite different, in that it encompasses the notions of dialogue; *rapprochement* and even friendship (even if this was not the actual outcome of their attempts to communicate, as mentioned above):

> *"Determinámos mandar um dos nossos turgimãos com este negro à presença de este senhor Batimansa: ...Mandámos-lhe dizer como tínhamos ali vindo por ordem do nosso senhor rei de Portugal, cristão, para haver com ele boa amizade, e para saber se ele teria necessidade das coisas das nossas terras, pois todos os anos o nosso senhor Rei lhas mandaria; e outras muitas palavras. O turgimão foi com o dito negro."*[111]

We can infer from these episodes that the building of bridges to produce cultural interaction was a work in progress: presumably Cadamosto learned from the less positive experiences of his first voyage and the Discoveries as a whole were constantly benefiting from collective knowledge. The role of linguistic mediation followed a parallel course: there were many mishaps in early voyages when they were ethically or linguistically unsuitable: Zurara's references are generally to a lack of informants or interpreters not being able to understand. In the excerpt below, we see that on his

110 Cf Zurara, op. cit. p.101

111 Cadamosto, op. cit. p.162. Our translation: "We decided to send one of our interpreters with this Negro to Lord Batimansa:...We instructed him to tell how we had been sent there by our lord the King of Portugal, a Christian, in order to have good friendship with him, and to know if he would need things from our lands, as every year our lord and King would send them; and many other words. The interpreter went with the said Negro."

voyage in 1441, Nuno Tristão took interpreters with him who knew Arabic but not Berber:

> *"Mandaram áquele alarve, que Nuno Tristão levava consigo, que falasse com aqueles Mouros; e nunca o poderam entender, porque a linguagem daqueles não é mourisca, mas azaneguia de Zaara que assim chama àquela terra."* [112]

He was fortunate in that one of the captives had learned Arabic on his travels to other lands and could thus act as the *lingoa.* On the other hand, the Mandinka interpreter that Cadamosto sent to the Batimansa (the King of the Bati) ultimately played a positive role in developing commercial relations. Moreover, his reaction to an insurmountable communication barrier was not to attack, but to return home, allowing for a peaceful connection to be maintained by his successors, who would have the possibility of finding the necessary linguistic mediators:

> *"Eu, desejoso de saber desta gente, pu-los a falar com os meus turgimãos: (mas) nenhum deles pôde entender coisa que lhes dissessem, tão pouco os das outras caravelas: o que vendo, muito nos aborreceu. Por fim, partimo-nos sem os poder entender.*
> *Vendo nós, por isto, que estávamos em país novo, e que não podíamos ser entendidos, concluímos que passar mais para diante era inútil, porque calculámos que iríamos encontrar linguagens cada vez mais novos (e) que, não as podendo entender, se não poderiam fazer coisas novas."* [113]

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112 cf. Zurara, op. cit. p. 75. Our translation: "They sent that Arab, who Nuno Tristão had brought along, to talk to these Moors; and they never managed to understand him, because their language is not Arabic but Berber from the Sahara, which was the name of that land."

113 cf. Peres, Damião, op. cit. p.172. Our translation: "I, wanting to know more of these people, had them speak to my interpreters: (but) none of them could understand what was being said to them, neither could those in the other caravels: which greatly annoyed us. We eventually left without being able to understand them. On seeing, hence, that we were in a new country, and that we could not be understood, we concluded that it was useless to go any further, because we assumed that we would

With each new voyage along the coast of Africa, successive geographical barriers, that inspired awe and fear, were overcome one after the other, with the seafarers extending Europe's knowledge of the globe. Meanwhile, the first meetings of peoples from different continents were equally difficult to negotiate, and linguistic; cultural and religious mistakes and misunderstandings abounded. The Portuguese explorers unsurprisingly lacked many of the requisite language and cultural skills to successfully approach the locals, but their strategies must be called into question. Even when they had their own linguists at their disposal, they would at times choose not to risk their safety, turning instead to their local guides, with mixed results. Moreover, claims that the Portuguese captured Africans for the specific purpose of teaching them their language so that they could serve as interpreters are far-fetched, for the prime interest of the Portuguese was to obtain information and only subsequently did they turn their attention to establishing dialogue with the communities they visited.

The selection methods of those that would accompany the voyages also reveal certain shortcomings: the pool of captives had not been brought to Portugal with this purpose in mind and when choosing from them, more emphasis was placed on possessing some knowledge of Portuguese (and one would imagine a certain physical robustness to endure the voyage) and less on loyalty or at least neutrality, if we are to believe Zurara, with scant awareness of which African languages they spoke. Moreover, in keeping with a general failure in the administration of the Discoveries, an appropriate rewards system was not initially or even subsequently envisaged, a matter we shall return to below.

We cannot overlook the fact that several authors have already pointed to a marked tendency for linguistic and cultural mediators to have been shadowy figures[114] as a result of their life experiences which saw them drift between two or more languages and cultures, yet we can also observe this phenomenon from the opposite standpoint, in that

find ever newer languages and that if we could not understand them, we would not be able to do anything."

114 cf. Couto, Dejanirah, *The Role of Interpreters, or Linguas, in the Portuguese Empire,* e-JPH, Vol. 1, number 2, Winter 2003, and Bouchon, Geneviève, *op. cit.*.

the difficulty in finding suitable, reliable interpreters for the voyages of Discovery and indeed during the early settlements in India and thus the recourse to these marginals stemmed from being persistently unprepared for the said cultural encounters. Furthermore, as we shall investigate in greater details below, generally speaking, little value was attached to the function of linguistic mediators or indeed to their very survival, for they were merely a means to an end, creating a vicious circle, whereby the lack of rewards exacerbated their shifting loyalties and in turn the mistrust and contempt surrounding them.

As stated above, achieving the desired cultural interaction was a learning process. Later on in this study, when we compare the approaches used by the explorers; the Portuguese overseas administration *(the Estado da Índia)*, and the Jesuits, we shall see that, by virtue of their having arrived in India some forty years after the first sea voyages, the latter adopted different strategies to overcome cultural and linguistic differences and avoided some of the mistakes made by those that preceded them.

2.3 A NO MAN'S LAND OF NO-LANDS' MEN

As the Expansion gathered steam, attention increasingly focused on establishing the much-coveted commercial partnerships. The first stage of exploration and the capturing of slaves was a prelude to the bigger prize of exchanging the slaves for the imagined riches of the African hinterland, merchandise with a far greater value in Europe than on the local market. Not only were more and more seafarers required, but also linguists were in increasing demand, not least because the kinds of interaction were changing and becoming more complex. The immediate concern for the Portuguese was to ensure that Arabic speakers embarked on these voyages, for it was a vehicular language in a much larger area than it is even today, with the Arabic-speaking world stretching at that time around much of the African coast, as far East as the Indian sub-continent and was readily understood by seafarers in much of Southern Asia.

Even though there was no provision of Arabic courses in the Portuguese university at that time, as previously mentioned, centuries of contact with the Moors in the Iberian

Peninsula and North Africa meant that there were some Portuguese who mastered the Arabic dialect of Morocco and were self-taught or had learned the language on military campaigns in North Africa, as succinctly explained by Sousa Viterbo:

> *"Apesar da língua arabica deixar um largo sulco no vocabulário da nossa língua, não obstante serem numerosos os individuos que a falavam estantes sob o nosso dominio, já no continente, já no littoral africano, embora tivesse chegado a ser uma lingua quasi universal, quer sob o ponto de vista diplomatico e religioso, quer sobo ponto de vista mercantil, o que é certo é que ella não era professada na Universidade como succedia com o hebraico. Não faltava, porém, quem a estudasse praticamente, o que era naturalissimo, attendendo ao contacto intimo e permanente em que estavamos com os musulmanos e às relações de toda a especie, que mutuamente sustentávamos."*[115]

Clearly, Portuguese speakers of Arabic could not cover all linguistic mediation needs in quantitative terms, especially as Portugal established settlements in North Africa following the military conquest of various towns, nor in qualitative terms, for the array of languages with which Portuguese came into contact multiplied, nor would this be desirable considering the risks involved. Thus, the Portuguese found themselves having to recruit from further afield, leading to greater diversity among those in their service, in addition to the appearance of interpreters who offered their services in pursuit of immediate recompense or who could even be supplied by the other party. We shall start by examining the most common backgrounds of these interpreters and

115 Sousa Viterbo, *Notícia de Alguns Arabistas e Intérpretes de Línguas Africanas e Orientaes*, Imprensa da Universidade, Coimbra 1906, p.9. Our translation: "Despite Arabic having left a broad imprint of vocabulary in our language, and notwithstanding the large number of individuals under our rule who spoke it, both in mainland Portugal and along the African coast, although it had become an almost universal language, from both a diplomatic and religious standpoint, and for the purposes of trade, what we do know is that it was not taught in the University, unlike Hebrew. There was not a shortage, however, of people who practised it individually, which was only natural, given our close and permanent contact with the Moslems and our wide range of mutual relations."

assessing their respective advantages and drawbacks.

The Portuguese were of course loathe to accept Moslems, the eternal enemy, in their service; even the Mudejar, who had previously proved their usefulness as *alfaqueques,* were excluded from participating as interpreters on voyages of Discovery, presumably because of fears of desertion and collusion, which had already prompted Portuguese monarchs to condition their travel to North Africa to prior royal authorisation. In the absence of an organised system, the Portuguese had to recruit resourcefully, invariably looking to those on the fringes of their society, who were in that position precisely because of their inter-cultural background. One obvious source of the indispensable linguistic and cultural skills was to turn to the internal Other, namely Jews living or having lived in the Iberian Peninsula. Their natural tendency towards bilingualism, according to Romano,[116] was not innate but the fruit of belonging to a minority group, which had not been assimilated.

During the age of Discovery, they came under increasing pressure in the Iberian peninsula until finally an expulsion edict was issued in Castile in 1492 and Portugal in 1497, unless they converted to Catholicism. Jews could end up on the caravels as prisoners sentenced to exile, but we also frequently find them on dry land, in particular in North Africa, where their skills and knowledge could be put to good and profitable use. Additionally, Jews held the obvious advantage over Moors, the so-called external Other,[117] of not being the enemy against whom the Portuguese had fought to "reconquer" their Nation. Furthermore, Yerushalmi points out that the Sephardic Jews who moved to Morocco spoke the Iberian language of their former place of residence (be it Castilian or Portuguese) to native level and were similar in appearance to other Iberian peoples. They used this Iberian language in the family and in everyday business, thus conserving knowledge of it over several generations. These linguistic and cultural similarities and physical resemblances would have made them feel less foreign to the

116 cf. Romano, David. (1991–92). "Hispanojudíos traductores del árabe." Boletín de la Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona 43, 211–232.

117 cf. Barreto, Luis Filipe, *op. cit.*

Portuguese, not so much the Other but closer to a different embodiment of the Self.[118]

Their usefulness was manifold: on the one hand, they could contribute their administrative experience, gained in the service of the Moors in the Kingdom of Granada, and on the other, their position as Gentiles from the both the Christian and Islamic perspectives, provided them with a platform of neutrality in a region where cultural interpenetration among Christians and Moslems was impossible and non-existent. One can imagine, nevertheless, that they would be regarded with suspicion or perhaps disdain, for their movement between cultures and their lack of religious assimilation had made them the object of persecution in Iberia. It also signified that their allegiance was unsure, demonstrated by the fact that they had served the Moors during their occupation of the Iberian Peninsula and would now provide vital support for the Portuguese occupation of Morocco. Yet, at the same time, Portuguese reliance on Jewish intermediaries was considerable on various levels, not least for providing access to networks of commercial contacts; credit and in everyday interaction with the Arabic-speaking locals and Moroccan authorities.[119] The dilemma that this indefinition raised is exemplified in the doubts concerning the suitability of entrusting an embassy to Jacob Rute, not Portuguese, not Christian but Jewish, objectively unfit for such high office, but ultimately awarded the mission.[120]

Couto also suggests that it was in the Portuguese interest to maintain a certain distance from Jewish intermediaries and allow them to conserve their faith, so that they would not be shunned by other members of their faith whose acquaintance was so valuable,[121] but presumably also to allow them to remain nominally equidistant to the

118 cf. Yerushalmi, Yosef Hayim – *Professing Jews in Post-Expulsion Spain and Portugal* in Salo Wittmayer Baron Jubilee Volume, vol. II apud. Tavim, José Alberto *Abrãao Benzamerro, «Judeu de Sinal», sem sinal, entre o Norte de África e o Reino de Portugal* in Mare Liberum 6, CNCDP

119 cf. Rosenberger, Bernard *Aspects du commerce portugais avec le Maroc (XV-XVIII siècles)* in *Aquém e Além da Taprobana,* ed. Thomas, Luís Filipe, Centro de História de Além-Mar, Universidade Nova de Lisboa 2002.

120 cf. Ricard, Robert *Les Sources Inédites,* p.184.

121 Couto, Dejanirah, *The Role of Interpreters, or* Linguas, *in the Portuguese Empire during the Sixteenth Century*

Moors. Rosenberger points out that Jews continued to serve the Portuguese in North Africa long after the 1497 expulsion decree, as the conversion order did not apply in North Africa or indeed anywhere in the *Estado da Índia*. Thus, it comes as no surprise that we should find Jews in Portuguese service abroad, for apostasy was not required unless they were to travel to Portugal itself. This can be seen from the conversion of Gaspar da Gama, upon arrival in the Azores, in contrast to the freedom of belief enjoyed by the interpreters in North Africa, who were even allowed to take their oaths on the Jewish holy books, the Talmud, when, having been royally commended for loyal service, the King would appoint them as the official or state interpreters to the Portuguese administration established in its strongholds in North Africa. [122]

> "*fazemos saber que pella cõfiamça que temos de Ayhoyo (sic) Adibe, judeu morador em a nosa cidade d'Azamor, que nos seruira com toda fielldade no que lhe ēcarregarem, e queremdolhe fazer graça e mercê, temos por bem e ho fazemos llimgua da nosa cidade d'Azamor, asy e pella maneira que he a llingua da cidade de Çafim*"[123]

Yet, at the same time, we observe the paradoxical epithet attached to the names of Jewish or formerly Jewish mediators by the chroniclers, *o Judeu* or *o que fora Judeu*, that expresses their continued position on the fringes of mainstream society.

In any case, to unravel the paths of many of those who worked as interpreters has posed a challenge to historians, for above all, these cosmopolitan and multilingual Jews circulated widely in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean regions, often with a view to furthering their commercial networks, adding to their value as intermediaries. Recruitment by one party did not diminish their sense of independence and thus, they could serve rival masters at different moments, perhaps presaging the freelance

122 cf. Sousa Viterbo, op. cit.

123 Adibe appointed in 1514 by King Manuel. Cf Sousa Viterbo, op.cit.. Our translation: "We announce that because of our trust in Ayhoyo Adibe,a Jew living in our city, Azamor, who has served us faithfully in all his missions, and wishing to reward him, we consider it fitting to make him the *llimgua* of our city of Azamor, in the same way as he is *llingua* of the city of Safim."

conference interpreter of today. Jacob Rute, son of the chief rabbi of Safim[124], was appointed to the post of *lingua de árabe* (interpreter of Arabic and testimony to his fluency in a range of languages and cultures) in Safim by King João III. He appears to have held the post for over a decade, and as mentioned above, was entrusted with certain diplomatic missions until he took up employment with the Sultan of Fez. At one time, the Sultan had shared a common enemy with the Portuguese: The Sheriff of Suz, but Rute, thereafter, actually worked against Portuguese interests by selling arms to Tlemcen and giving instructions not to sell horses and provisions to the Portuguese.[125]

Similarly, Abraão Benzamerro, *língua,* which by that time, that is to say the sixteenth century, was the term used to designate an official interpreter working for the Portuguese, in this case in Mazagan where Benzamerro had considerable business interests, also promoted the contradictory causes of the Sheriff of Suz.[126] It, therefore, appears reasonable to consider a certain mistrust justified, for ultimately, many of these mediators sought to promote their own interest rather than that of either of the two sides. We shall analyse below how this has affected the narrative on the history of interpreting in the Portuguese Discoveries.

Some Jewish *línguas* could also be found in India, including some of the best-known mediators to have served the Portuguese in the early days of their settlement. Like their "North African" counterparts, they stood out by dint of their linguistic and cultural skills, but their status and position was quite different, since they were originally captured by the Portuguese and forced into their service. Thus one can also defend the notion that there was an overlap in different sources of linguistic mediators, in that the Portuguese had frequently used captives as local guides and interpreters from their fifteenth century voyages onwards.

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124 Ricard claims that Jacob Rute was the son of Abraão Benzamerro (cf. *Les Sources Inédites de l'Histoire du Maroc, Portugal Vol. IV, p.106)* whereas for Tavim, he was the son of Abraão Rute, and thus from a rival family of the Benzamerro.

125 cf. Tavim, José Alberto *Abrãao Benzamerro, «Judeu de Sinal», sem sinal, entre o Norte de África e o Reino de Portugal* in Mare Liberum 6, CNCDP, p.121 and Ricard, op. cit. Vol. IV, p.111

126 Cf Tavim, op. cit. p.123

We have already analysed the use of captive interpreters to facilitate contact with non-Arabic speaking peoples in the Gulf of Guinea in the mid-fifteenth century. Such captives constituted one of the major profiles of linguistic mediators on board ship throughout the exploration of the Indian Ocean region, since the number of languages with which the Portuguese came into contact multiplied. There were a few exceptions to this pattern; for instance, there were the Portuguese soldiers who had been held in North African prisons and others who had been among the first settlers in Guinea and Congo who were included in the crew. Convicts were often used, some of whom already had some knowledge of Arabic or others picked up locally, at times from having been left along the route to act as spies and informants, and then re-embarking to serve on a subsequent expedition.

Gradually, this practice of leaving convicts in the various stopping-off points led to the emergence of a new group of linguistic intermediaries with a different profile. They can be loosely defined as a class of renegade Portuguese. They were given the epithet of *lançados*, a name derived from the Portuguese verb, *lançar*, which in this context appears to have originally meant *those that were cast off*, with a view to exploring the hinterland. Although the term *lançado* has primarily been associated with Guinea, the clue to their emergence could lie in Gaspar Correia's *Lendas da Índia*, in which he describes how Vasco da Gama deliberately left ten convicts who had been sentenced to death in Mozambique. They were literally abandoned there and forced to fend for themselves, with Gama's intention having been to make use of them on the return or in a subsequent voyage were they to survive their ordeal. In all likelihood, he imagined that they would learn local languages and be able to provide information about trading opportunities *"pera os aventurar e deixar em terras perdidas onde se viuessem podião muito aproueitar quando os tornassem a achar;"*[127]

However, this did not always go according to plan, as once they were on their own, the *lançados* could move freely. Some undertook important inland explorations which

127 Lopes de Almeida, Manuel (ed.) *Lendas da Índia por Gaspar Correia* vol. I, pp.41-2. Our translation: "to have them venture out and be left in lost lands where if they survived would be very useful when they were found again."

benefited the Portuguese, such as António Fernandes, who was the first European to reach the Monomatapa Empire, whilst others moved on from one region to the next sometimes acting as informants for local leaders, or decided to throw their lot in with the locals, as referred to in a letter from King Manuel I, dated 1517: *"christãos que se lançaram em Guiné com os negros"*[128]

Further insight is provided by Boxer[129], who describes the Portuguese who went native, settling down along the Guinea and other river basins, adopting local customs, taking concubines and learning local languages, so that they could set up their own private, trading enterprises. Bouchon claims that this phenomenon marked the beginning of a parallel Portuguese presence throughout the route of the Discoveries, which co-existed alongside the royal patronage, often competing with it.[130] It also arose as a result of the lack of rewards that trickled down the ranks to the ordinary seafarers, who thus decided to settle in far-flung corners. In addition, Mark and Horta[131] draw our attention to the fact that another of the sub-groups of *lançados* in Senegambia were Jews and New Christians (who secretly practised Judaism in their new place of abode), often forced into exile, but who like others seized the opportunity of freedom from religious and criminal persecution, eventually building up a community on the Petite Côte. At times, they themselves were the commercial and linguistic intermediaries, but on other occasions, they had the function of trading partners and employed local interpreters. Thus, we see that these characters could actually live on several peripheries at once and that the inter-cultural space that they inhabited had not merely dual but multiple linguistic; cultural and religious influences.

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128 Apud. Sousa Viterbo, op. cit. Our translation: "Christians who have thrown in their lot with the Negroes in Guinea."

129 Boxer, C.R., *Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire, 1415-1825,* Clarendon Press Oxford, 1963.

130 cf. Bouchon, Geneviève *Pionniers Oubliés: Les Interprètes Portugais en Asie dans les Premières Années du XVI siècle* in *Inde Découverte, Inde Retrouvée 1498-1630,* Comissão Nacional para os Descobrimentos Portugueses, Lisbon-Paris 1999

131 Mark, Peter & Horta, José da Silva, *The Forgotten Diaspora* Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 31 & 52.

In summary, it becomes only too evident that the *lançados* in Guinea were a heterogeneous group in themselves: some were convicts banished from Portugal as a punishment and cast off the exploration vessels, including not just Portuguese but also captive Africans returned and ordered to explore the hinterland,[132] others abandoned the State out of their own free will in search of a greater portion of the material gains, whilst Guinea also provided a safe harbour for minority groups.

Though useful as intermediaries in bartering deals, they did not curry favour with the Portuguese authorities, since they were in some way or another marginals who, for one reason or another, had turned their backs on patriotic service and as private traders avoided paying taxes owed to the Crown, and were criticised for engaging in debauchery.[133] King Manuel actually issued instruction for their assets to be confiscated and donated to the All Saint's Hospital in Lisbon, suggesting that their gains were actually ill-gotten:

> *"Nos ElRey fazemos saber a quantos este nosso alvará virem que nós temos feito mercee, e Esmola ao nosso Esprital de todolos Santos desta nossa Cidade de Lisboa de todalas fazendas daquellas pessoas, que se lanção ou sam lançados em guiné com os Negros."*[134]

The explorers had been instrumental in creating this phenomenon, which can be viewed as the reversal of the earlier procedure of using captives as their linguistic and cultural mediators. These were brought under the control of the State and became

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132 cf. Oliveira e Costa and Lacerda, op. cit.., p.92

133 cf. Brásio, Padre António, *Monumenta Missionária Africana*, Agência-Geral do Ultramar, Lisboa, 1964. 2nd series, Vol III

134 Alvará régio, 7.2.1512, apud. GUERREIRO, Fernão. *Relação anual das coisas que fizeram os padres da Companhia de Jesus nas suas missões nos anos de 1600 a 1609*. (Ed. Artur Viegas). Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1930-1942. Our translation: "We the King inform all those who see this decree that we have made a reward and alms to the All Saints' Hospital of this our city of Lisbon of all the assets of those people who throw in their lot or who are thrown in with the blacks in Guinea."

accustomed to the Portuguese, an Other whose differences were reduced, whereas the *lançados* moved out of the control of the State and became accustomed to local cultures, a Self whose similarities were weakened. Neither process brought wholly satisfactory results in the short-term, but in the long run, the latter did at least produce a first generation of natural bilinguals of hybrid culture, through the mixed marriages between Portuguese *lançados* and local women.

The next generation of mixed race launched the second phase of the diaspora, the *Afro-Portuguese* or *Luso-Africans,* as well as *Luso-Indians* in Brazil and *Luso-Asians* throughout the Indian Ocean region and as far as the Eastern Indonesian islands, whose varying roles as intermediaries shall be discussed below. In West Africa, these mulatto offspring of the first Portuguese who went native, plied the same trade as their fathers had; became more Africanised, and were sometimes referred to as *Tangomaus* or *Tango-magos*, which Boulègue suggests is a nickname originating in Sierra Leone, although its similarity to the old Portuguese word, *turgimão*, is striking. Some started to enjoy a special relationship with local rulers, even marrying into royal families[135].

The example that we have most information about is that of a man originally named Ferreira, who according to André Alvares de Almada (a Cape-Verdian captain of mixed race) writing in 1594 married into the Gran-Fulo empire in the hinterland and became known as *Ganagoga*, the master of all languages:

> *"este lançado português se foi ao Reino do Gran-Fulo ... e na corte de Gran-Fulo se casou com huma filha sua, daqual teve huma filha... E chama-se João Ferreira, da nação, e chamado pelos negros o Ganagoga, que quer dizer, na língua dos Beafares, homem que falla todas as línguas, como de feito falla a dos negros."*[136]

135 cf. Boxer, op. cit. p.11

136 Kopke, Diogo (ed.), *O Tratado Breve dos Rios da Guiné e de Cabo Verde de André Alvares de Almada,* Typographia Commercial Portuense, 1844, p. 15 Our translation: "This Portuguese *lançado* went to the Gran-Fulo kingdom... and in the Court of the Gran-Fulo married one of his daughters, with whom he had a daughter... And his name is João Ferreira, from Portugal, and called Ganagoga by the

Ferreira had prior to that already been in the service of an African called *Duque de Casão* by Almada and is used by him as an example of the *lançados* who were undermining official Portuguese trade. Niang, who is one of the few African scholars to have written about the long history of linguistic and cultural mediation on the continent, also refers to the status enjoyed by interpreters in contemporary African kingdoms. What transpires from her description is that this generation of linguists also had greater attachment to the Africans, but could equally be the targets of anger as a result of perceived divided loyalty:

> *"The well-known empires and kingdoms of that time (e.g. Mali, Ghana and Massina) had close links with the Maghreb and even some of the European countries, such as Portugal, thus requiring the use of interpretation services. The interpreter in those days often acted as ambassador and advisor. He was a high official.... he was sometimes viewed as a traitor and a scapegoat."*[137]

We can clearly observe a phenomenon whereby as the *lançados* being more integrated among African rulers, so their affinity to the Portuguese would wane, which was particularly disagreeable, since they acquired more power and influence over trade. They had the role of go-betweens in deals with the Portuguese vessels but also with all other visiting ships, as Portuguese took hold as the language of trade along the coast of Guinea. Thus, they had a dual function: to act as commercial intermediaries, given their position of trust by the rulers, and as linguistic intermediaries, since subsequent generations had been brought up with a local language and Portuguese. Being able to use their own language actually provided the Portuguese with a commercial advantage over their European rivals, also eager to find slaves and commodities in this area. The latter's communication with local leaders, who would often refuse to negotiate unless through the Lusophone *lançado* under their influence, was less direct, requiring two

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black, which in the Beafar language means the man who speaks all languages, as he indeed speaks the language of the blacks."

137 Niang, Anna *History and Role of Interpreting in Africa* in ed. Bowen, David and Margareta *Interpreting, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam 2008.

interpreters (one into Portuguese for communication with the *lançado* and the *lançado* himself*).*

Yet, from Almada's treatise we can glean that there was also the opposite trend whereby Africans would become more occidentalised: *"entre neste negros andam muitos que sabem fallar a nossa lingoa Portugueza, e andam vestidos ao nosso modo. E assim muitas negras ladinas, chamadas tangomas, porque servem aos lançados"*[138] and this is what Niang could be referring to when she points to them being considered traitors by the African rulers. There was yet another variation on the chain of communication in these settings, whereby the *lançado* would not necessarily act as the linguistic intermediary himself but use the services of a *grumete*, (literally a cabin-boy) of African race who acted as pilot, guide and point of contact with chieftains.[139] Gradually, the expression *lançado* or *tangomao* was extended to cover the entire entourage, including as we have seen above, members of the household and servants, with the *lançados* progressively forming distinct communities, that is to say, living separately from other villagers, but with their racial distinction becoming lost.[140] José Horta highlights the fact that they would actually assume more than one cultural identity (like our man, João Ferreira, alias Ganagoga), acting like Europeans or Africans according to the setting and whom their interlocutor was, epitomising the interpreter who drifts back and forth between different cultures.

As mentioned above, the term *lançado* has rarely been associated with those who were cast off along the Indian Ocean coasts, although the term was used in the contemporary account by Father Fernão Guerreiro, when he referred to their numbering hundreds in the interior of Sofala (a kingdom in Northern Mozambique) in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, and their situation undoubtedly resembled that of those

138 Kopke, Diogo, (ed.) *op. cit.*, p.60. Our translation: "There are many among these blacks who can speak our Portuguese language and dress like we do. And there are many such *ladino* (mixed-race) women, so-called *tangomãs*, because they serve the *lançados.*"

139 cf. Horta, José da Silva, *A "Guiné de Cabo Verde", Produção Textual e Representações (1578-1684)* accessed at *ww3.fl.ul.pt/nautica/aulas/HORTA.JS-Guine_do_Cabo_Verde.pdf* on 14.9.2014

140 cf. Da Silva, Maria da Grala Garcia Nolasco, *Subsídios para o Estudo dos Lançados na Guiné* in Boletim da Guiné Portuguesa, XXV, 1970.

who settled along the river basins of Guinea. The former are more commonly referred to as the *degredados* or deportees, who, like the first African captives acting as guides and linguistic mediators were forced to embark and subsequently disembark on the voyages.[141]

In this case, we can state that marginals were deliberately being chosen to undertake dangerous missions, in all probability because for them it was a preferable alternative to their original sentence being enforced (frequently a death sentence) and for the Portuguese their lives held little value. In addition, their background would seemingly have provided them with survival instincts and a certain physical robustness to withstand the difficult conditions they would encounter (let us not forget that there was a very high rate of mortality amongst the Portuguese explorers in Africa as a result of fevers). Yet once again, the Portuguese were running a risk, since these deportees could of course learn local languages or Arabic after having been cast off and fall in with local leaders, just like the *lançados* of West Africa, especially since they did not have any military or administrative cover. There was no guarantee that they would re-embark on a subsequent expedition, so the Portuguese through this policy actually helped create informants and interpreters for their prospective enemies.

Indeed, there are contemporary references in the chronicles to these deportees being discovered integrated into the societies of Indian Ocean port cities. Often these figures are not mentioned by name but merely identified by the epithet *arrenegado*, which as we underscored in the introduction to this study, was synonymous with renegade or traitor. The difference in the term used can perhaps be explained by the religious perspective: the *lançados* were described by King Manuel as Christians who had taken up with the blacks, considered to be pagans, whilst these *arrenegados* were essentially to be found in Moslem societies and courts. There was little danger of the former taking up Islam (although Oliveira e Costa does claim that they practised the local religions) and, moreover, they were living amongst Gentiles and not the mortal enemy of the Portuguese, whilst the latter could and did undergo apostasy, which was considered the ultimate negation of allegiance to their country. Such conversion could

141 Oliveira e Costa and Lacerda, *op. cit.*, refer to them as replicas of the *lançados.*

be forced upon them, just as the Portuguese obliged captive Moors to convert on pain of death, or it could be voluntary, as a strategy for survival.

In fact, those who acted as *lingoas* for the enemy were just a small minority of the dozens if not hundreds of Portuguese soldiers who deserted their army during the early years of the Indian conquest, frequently as a result of the enormous hardship that they endured during sieges and attacks by local forces. Many more played an important role in the war of propaganda: on the one hand, they could supply information to their new employers (revealing the weaknesses of the Portuguese defences and the poor physical condition and low morale of the troops), whilst on the other hand, their knowledge of Portuguese was put to god use, in particular when besieging a fortress, to taunt those who had remained loyal and encourage further defection. Yet, at the same time, such behaviour was often an exaggerated attempt by the renegades to allay suspicions concerning their fealty to their new masters. They were mercenaries interested in improving their material conditions and such adaptation was a deliberate ploy to camouflage their identities and loyalties. Thus, they could fight for the enemy, dress like Moslems, but guard their Christian faith even if outwardly they claimed to have converted.

We also find the epithet *arrenegado* associated with Portuguese who by chance were living among Moslems, without necessarily having deserted from the army: Diogo Felique, for example, is mentioned by Correia as having run away from his father and been taken captive by the Turks[142]; whilst Bastião Rodrigues Rachado ("the cracked one") who, during the 1524 siege of the fort of Calicut, supplied information to the captain of the fort, João de Lima, a childhood friend, had fled to the Moslems and become a member of the King of Calicut's entourage, because he was constantly taunted by his compatriots for having been raped on the voyage over to India.[143] These cases of Portuguese, or indeed other Southern Europeans, who for an assortment of reasons might end up living among Moslems were often those whose wealth of linguistic and cultural experience led them to providing sporadic interpreting services to the explorers,

142 cf. Gaspar, Correia, op. cit.vol. I, p.960

143 cf.Correia, Gaspar, op. cit. Vol. II pp. 810-11

but also to their new lords. Bastião Rodrigues, for instance, had a long career in India, for Barros mentions him as acting as messenger and informant during the 1512 siege of Benasteri, when he put to good use the Arabic that he had picked up whilst imprisoned following the battle of Chaul against the Mamluk Egyptian fleet in 1508[144]. Accordingly, these examples also include the Portuguese who did indeed convert to Islam, marrying into the faith and as a result climbing the social ladder; it is such figures that we find in Moslem courts, acting as advisors; informants and interpreters to local sovereigns.

Therefore, there were always grave doubts concerning where their loyalty lied, just as the Moslem rulers were suspicious of their interpreters, reflected in the accusations the King of Calicut levied at Bontaibo, the very man he had sent to trick and betray the Portuguese, that he was a Christian, because he came from faraway. The biography of João Machado, who is perhaps the best-known deportee to have acted as a *língua,*[145] provides us with an excellent view of someone who escaped such criticism by virtue of his personal qualities, even though he was a dogged survivor who used his language skills among other considerable talents to achieve high office. The treatment of João Machado, though, must be understood in the appropriate historiographical light: the chroniclers were aware of the need to create a Portuguese epic. One of the historiographical currents in vogue in the sixteenth century was the Ciceronian, which defended that understanding human nature and development should be the foremost concern for the historian[146]. Our *lingua,* therefore, is raised to the status of a hero, despite several skeletons in his closet, befitting of a renegade.

Gaspar Correia informs us that Machado had embarked on the São Rafael skippered by Paulo da Gama, after he and a friend, Damião Rodrigues, had been sentenced to hang for killing a man in Rossio (the central square in Lisbon). He was one

144 cf. Rocha, Sara, op. cit. p.150

145 In João Machado's case, he performed several of the activites encompassed by the term *língua* as described below.

146 cf. Avelar, Ana Paula Menino *Fernão Lopes de Castanheda: Historiador dos Portugueses na Índia ou Cronista do Governo de Nuno da Cunha?* Edições Cosmos, Lisbon, 1997.

of the men to have been sent ashore by the expedition[147] in Mozambique and was joined there by hs friend, who jumped overboard and swam to the beach (thus, one who was *lançado,* i.e cast off, and one who *se lançou*, i.e. cast himself off). He proved to be particularly popular with the Sheikh, with whom he could converse as he already know some Arabic, telling him of some of the marvels of Portugal. He subsequently moved up the coast to Kilwa and Mombasa, whose kings he also conversed with about his homeland, with his good manners unusual for a convicted murderer: *"João Machado era homem de boa presença e boas falas, e bem ensinado."*[148] One would have thought that, being Portuguese, these deportees would have held the advantage of being less likely to join the ranks of the locals, but being left to their own devices, they too were forced to adapt to alterity.[149]

Lima Cruz conducted an insightful and detailed study of João Machado[150] based on references made to his life in the Orient by the three major contemporary chroniclers, Castanheda, Barros and Correia, providing us with an excellent example of how a deportee becomes a renegade; informant to local rulers and their intimate (both in Africa and Asia); interpreter, and double agent before finally returning to the fold and negotiating peace on behalf of the Portuguese. Machado epitomises the deportee, *lançado* or sent ashore, who dressed as a Moor relied on his wits and made his way by boat to Cambay in Northern Industan, where he perfected his Arabic. From there, he went to work for the Sultans of Bijapur, providing them with copious information about the Portuguese (a common function of renegade soldiers).

What is of interest to us here, however, are the different accounts of what João Machado did or did not need to do to prove his allegiance. Correia claims that he never hid his origins and even obtained a written derogation from the Sultan, excusing him

147 The expedition in question was Vasco da Gama's discovery of the sea route to India in 1498.

148 cf. Correia, Gaspar, op. cit. p.160. Our translation: "João Machado was handsome and well-spoken and well-mannered."

149 cf. Oliveira e Costa, J. and Lacerda, T. op. cit. p.93

150 Lima Cruz, Maria Augusta *As andanças de um degredado em terras perdidas – João Machado*, in Mare Liberum 5, Comissão Nacional para a Comemoração dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, July 1993, p.40.

from fighting the Portuguese. Nevertheless, Adil Shah addresses him as Çufo, which Correia explains was his Moslem name. Barros claims that he acted like a Moor but never abandoned his Christian faith, whilst Castanheda states that Machado dressed like a Turk to hide his Christian background. In addition, when Machado is sent by the Sultan to persuade Albuquerque to abandon Goa, Castanheda credits him with repeatedly warning the Portuguese of impending attacks, whilst in Correia's version, he advised the Moslem leader, Adil Shah, that the Portuguese would fight to the bitter end. He acts first as the peace negotiator for Adil Shah, having in this capacity conversed with Afonso de Albuquerque who encouraged him to switch sides again and subsequently is sent by the Portuguese to settle terms of peace, after having entered the fortress as Benasteri with a group of twenty three repentant renegades. Both Castanheda and Correia credit him with a rousing speech to his comrades at arms to return to the true faith. In the version of the latter, he likens their act of compunction to the Biblical parable of the Kingdom of Heaven rejoicing more over the repentance of one sinner who repents than ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance (Luke 15:7), putting the following words into João Machado's mouth:

> *"E postoque o tenhamos offendido tanto tempo, andando entre estes infiéis fazendo tantos pecados, por ysso he tão grande Deos que sempre está com os braços abertos pera nos perdoar, que mór prazer se faz no Céo com hum pecador que se salua, que cem inocentes."*[151]

The Portuguese were of course undertaking God's work, through their crusade to spread the Christian faith in the Orient, so such declarations would have been highly appreciated by a contemporary audience, reminding us of how in Zurara the celestial wheels punished Gonçalo de Sintra for not following instructions inspired by God and how the interpreter instigated his demise. The crux of the matter here is that the renegade *lingoa* is one of the characters who drifts between two cultures, despised for

151 Correia, Gaspar, op. cit., vol. II, p.212. Our translation: "And despite having offended him for so long, by living among these infidels and sinning so much, this is why God is so great as his arms are always open ready to forgive us, for there is more rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner who repents, than a hundred righteous men."

having abandoned his faith, but necessary for supplying intelligence, representing a special danger to the Portuguese, to be derided by chroniclers as the Devil incarnate or alternatively lauded as a hero.

For their part, Luso-Asian communities developed quickly, not least because Afonso de Albuquerque, as governor of the *Estado da Índia*, openly encouraged mixed marriages, with a view to combating the dearth of Portuguese women taken on the voyages and populating conquered territories with Portuguese-speaking Christians, but also as the result of Portuguese merchants settling in a wide variety of locations with a view to profiting from the many lucrative trading opportunities. The bilingual offspring resulting from such marriages, in India particularly, constituted a new ethnic group in Asian ports: they identified themselves with the Portuguese and staunchly defended Portuguese imperial interests; openly professed the Christian faith and had Christian names; they dressed in Western style, but had Asian appearance.[152] With their hybrid cultural background yet strong allegiance to the Portuguese, they were not only natural but almost ideal interpreters and would come to play an important role in establishing communication between the state, the Catholic church (especially the Jesuits in India) and local communities.

Those who worked directly as interpreters for missionaries were commonly called *topazes*, a term which appears more frequently than either *interprete* or *lingua* (in their various possible spellings) in Jesuit correspondence in India in the second half of the sixteenth century as edited by Joseph Wicki SJ, in *Documenta Indica*. Meanwhile, as far as this author is aware, coeval chroniclers do not employ the term, although it does appear in other contemporary correspondence, such as letters written by certain Ceylonese rulers (with the help of the said *topazes*), which would place the word in the variety of Portuguese spoken in Southern India and Ceylon. Apparently, *topaz* had a specific meaning and is not merely a synonym for interpreter. According to Dalgado,[153] it had three meanings; its etimon is the Dravidian word, *tuppasi* which is derived from

152 cf. Oliveira e Costa, J.P. e Lacerda, T. op. cit. p.87

153 cf. Dalgado, Mgr. Sebastião Rodolfo *Glossário Luso-Asiático, vol. II*, p.381 Imprensa da Universidade, Coimbra, 1919.

the Sanskrit *dvibhasya*, literally two languages, but used to describe someone who was bilingual, an interpreter. This is indeed one of the three meanings given by Dalgado for the Luso-Asian term, an interpreter of Portuguese and one or more vernacular languages, whilst another is a person of mixed parentage:

> *"mestiço, para designar os que pretendiam ser descendentes de portugueses, falavam português, trajavam à portuguesa, professavam a religião católica e de ordinário serviam como soldados."*

There are two significant references in this definition, namely the *topaz*'s creed, Catholicism, and his cultural identity, Portuguese, although he is clearly a native of India. This author suggests that the *topaz* interpreters for the Jesuits would have shared these qualities, in addition to their knowledge of Portuguese. Furthermore, their role was not circumscribed to linguistic and cultural intermediation in religious settings, but that they would have actually preached and acted as instruments for evangelisation by attracting members of their communities to the Catholic fold, by dint of their affinity to both cultures, as we can deduce from Jesuit records:

> *"Hé este moço de idade de 13 annos, de bom juizo e discrição, e habil pera todas as cousas que lhe mandão fazer, e gentil homem e bem desposto. Esperamos em o Senhor que sairá hum bom topaz e que há-de fazer muito fruito e trazer todos seus parentes à fee."*[154]

A particularly interesting example of how they acted as assistants in evangelisation can be seen from the following extract, in which a *topaz* helps a priest write and stage a play explaining the errors of the local faith:

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154 Wicki, J. (ed.) *Documenta Indica vol. VIII*, p.165. Our translation: "This boy is 13 years' old, has intelligence and good sense, and is good at everything he is asked to do, he is well-mannered and good-humoured. We hope to God that he will make a good *topaz* and that he will bring us much success and all his relatives to the faith."

> *"Depois de acabada a percisão se lhe representou hum autho em malavar, que o Pe. Cunha fez com hum seu topaz, em que avia boas figuras. O auto tratava primeiramente reprovando a ley dos gentios, mostrando nella por algumas rezões e exemplos ser falsa...."*[155]

in which their knowledge of both Christian and local culture would have proved extremely useful.

The meeting of cultures and languages was perhaps at its strongest in Macao, which attracted Asians from many parts, including Japan; the Phillipines; Siam, Ceylon and Malacca. A Luso-Asian mestizo community emerged, which later on would be bolstered by arrivals of Luso-Japanese, when Christianity was outlawed in Japan.[156] In the second half of the sixteenth century, the Luso-Chinese were employed as the *jurubaças* or Chinese interpreters in Macao, which was the territory in the Portuguese Empire where the activity of interpreting came to be most clearly structured, with rules concerning the recruitment of interpreters in the city having first been set out in 1627.[157]

Perhaps the most interesting examples of the bilingual diaspora, however, come from South East Asia, namely the Burmese kingdoms[158] and Siam. The Portuguese sent the first ambassador of European origin there in 1511. Afonso de Albuquerque chose Duarte Fernandes for the mission, who had gained at least a basic grasp of Malay during his imprisonment in Malacca as a member of Ruy de Araujo's group. The Siamese king was very receptive, as he saw the Portuguese as allies in his struggle against the Moslem rulers of Malacca. A series of reciprocal embassies then ensued over the course of that decade, with Duarte Coelho having been appointed ambassador in 1518 because

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155 Wicki, J. (ed.) *Documenta Indica vol. VII,* p.426. "After the procession had ended, a play in the Malabar language was put on, which Father Cunha had written with his interpreter, in whihc they acted well. The play first of all criticised the pagan religion, showing some reasons and examples of its falsehoods...."

156 cf. Oliveira e Costa and Lacerda, op. cit. p.122

157 Regimento da Língua da Cidade e dos Jurubaças menores e Escrivaens.

158 For example, Arakan, Ava and Pegu.

having travelled there previously, he was well-versed in the customs of Siam.[159] With Siam open to trade, Portuguese began to settle close to the Siamese imperial capital of Ayutthaya, founding a Portuguese village, which came to be populated by generations of bilinguals and trilinguals. The community of Portuguese descent grew steadily and was then quickly bolstered by inflows of Catholics fleeing Malacca and Mocassar when they were captured by the Dutch in 1641 and the 1660's respectively, reaching a peak of some four thousand people in the 1680's. Their linguistic skills were required to interpret in the ports and at the customs houses, where they handled business with all European trading vessels, as a result of a lack of interpreters for other languages (in the same way as the *lançados* held this pivotal role in Guinea).

What is curious about their situation is the fact that as the Portuguese did not set up any sort of administration in Siam or Burma. The communities became Siamese or Burmese subjects, and thus the interpreters were employed by the respective royal authorities. Furthermore, not only did some enjoy the privilege of working directly for the King, but also acted as his advisors on foreign affairs. Thus, when Pero Vaz de Siqueira made his voyage to Siam in 1684, as an Ambassador sent by the Portuguese Viceroy of India, he did not carry his own interpreters, because the Portuguese did not have any for the Siamese language as they did not have an administration there, but rather they were provided by the Siamese, as he recounts:

> *"vierão três mandarins a fragata dos principaes do Reyno com hum lingua Augustinho Rosado a quem mandava perguntar o Senhor Embaixador se os ditos mandarins erão pessoas a quem se devessem cortezias"* [160]

Naturally, their allegiance to the Siamese crown aroused a certain suspicion among the Portuguese, who were unsure to what extent their one-time compatriots would

159 cf. Smith, Ronald Bishop *The First Age* Decatur Press, Bethesda, Maryland, 1968, pp.7-19

160 Seabra, Leonor de *A Embaixada ao Sião de Pero Vez de Siqueira (1684-1686)* Universidade de Macau, 2003. Our translation: three Mandarins came to the frigate of the leading figures of the Realm with a *lingua* Agostinho Rosado who the Ambassador ordered be asked if the said Mandarins were people to whom one should bow:"

defend their interests, by furnishing them with information and interpreting accurately. Nevertheless, the situation was even more precarious for the other trading nations, such as the Dutch and the English, and embassies, which right into the early nineteenth century, were confronted by the need to conduct their business with the Siamese authorities through the medium of the Portuguese language, which was translated and interpreted by the then seemingly ubiquitous centuries-old community of *Protukét,* as they were known locally.

The curious effect of this was that some would also be employed directly by other nations in their factories. Several English journals written by visitors to Siam in the 1820's and early 1830's recount being met by translators or interpreters of Portuguese extraction including Bento Pascoal de Albergaria, who was in great favour with King Rama II. He was described by Crawford[161] as "remarkable" and fluent in Siamese, Cambodian and Portuguese, as well as being able to speak Latin accurately. He had actually been born in Battambang, Cambodia but had moved to Bangkok as a child, and provides us with an example of the spread and the diversity of the Portuguese diaspora in South East Asia at that time and the close relationship they enjoyed with local authorities.

What is ironic about the *Protukét* is that this was a community of linguistic mediators which grew up spontaneously, without there being any deliberate policy directed by the Portuguese administration. Portuguese, albeit in a bastardised form, survived as the language of trade and diplomacy in Siam for a little over three centuries, although the community of Portuguese speakers living in the country was far from numerous. Furthermore, it had struggled against various threats, such as the military defeat of the Siamese by Cambodian forces, in which the *Protukét* were forced to flee their village, and the banning of the use of Portuguese in church and its teaching by French missionaries. We suspect that like other successes in linguistic and cultural mediation, this phenomenon can be ascribed to the peaceful co-existence of the

161 Crawford, John *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochinchina exhibiting a view of the actual state of those kingdoms.* London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830, vol. I p.275-6, apud. Castelo Branco, op. cit. p.30

imported community alongside the native one, in addition to a system of rewards and recognition that encouraged the conservation of the linguistic and inter-cultural skills required of interpreters. In a later section of this study, we shall analyse how this phenomenon compares to the systematic policies of the most prominent religious order in the Eastern Portuguese empire, the Company of Jesus, to recruit and train their linguistic and cultural mediators and how they contributed to the success of the Jesuit mission.

CHAPTER THREE
REWARDS, TRUST AND THE STATUS OF INTERPRETERS

3.1 A SYSTEM OF REWARDS

One of the essential elements for determining the success of any enterprise is the motivation given to its participants. The Portuguese expansion itself was driven by several objectives defined by Prince Henry the Navigator and recorded by the royal chronicler, Gomes Eanes da Zurara, in the *Crónica da Guiné*, written during the Prince's lifetime. Religious motivation was very strong, of course, since the Portuguese saw the Moslems of North Africa as their eternal enemies. In addition, Christians still felt the spirit of the Crusades and there was a constant struggle for supremacy in the Levant against the Ottomans. The Portuguese themselves believed they could open up a new front in this war and searched for Christian allies to support them in this endeavour. Furthermore, as a deeply religious man living in a time of strong religious convictions, Henry felt it his duty to assist in the evangelisation of pagans and the redemption of their souls. He is also credited with having considered the economic interest of gaining knowledge about lands lying to the South and East of Portugal and establishing commercial partnerships. Furthermore, the seafarers taking part in the voyages of Discovery were driven in no small measure by patriotism, in addition to religious zeal and clearly the economic and financial gains to be obtained through their share of the profits from trade.

As several historians have pointed out and can be seen from various contemporary accounts, the Portuguese Crown introduced a system of rewards during the Age of Discoveries and particularly in the *Estado da Índia.* Many participants, though, felt they were unjustly treated or simply realised that they could make greater profit by pursuing their private business interests rather than the King's. In fact, once the Portuguese had found trading partners in India and such business began to prove extremely profitable

(especially bearing in mind the limits put on Mediterranean trade following the fall of Constantinople some decades earlier), more and more merchants from the Portuguese nobility would rent space on vessels to send their own cargo back to Europe. Bouchon and Thomaz highlight the lack of profit for ordinary sailors as a major factor in the *lançados'* decision to slash their ties to Portugal.[162] Such motives can equally be applied to renegade Portuguese who joined Moslem chiefs' armies, as well as numerous administrative officials and explorers who in fact competed against the State, depriving it of the revenue needed to maintain the endeavour of the Discoveries.

Our specific interest lies in the motivation provided to the linguistic mediators and their status on board ship and in the territories occupied by the Portuguese. This is of fundamental concern for understanding the relationship that the Portuguese had with their interpreters and how the interpreters considered the Portuguese and their duties to them. We have already discussed above how the Portuguese had an ancestral mistrust of linguistic intermediaries, as a result among other things, of their association with the traitors who had fought for the Castillians in Portugal's great struggle to maintain its independence in the 1380's and their general suspicion of Arabic speakers, owing to the centuries-old conflict with the Moors. We can, therefore, conclude that many of the seafarers would have been ill-disposed *a priori* towards their mediators.

Furthermore, the Portuguese navigators and explorers especially disliked having to rely on anyone outside their close circle in the tense and dangerous situations of unprecedented meetings of cultures, for control of their fate was thus wrested from them. They always attempted to bring along their own interpreters, who as minor nobles or courtiers shared the same purposes and would be rewarded, just like any other respected crew-member. As we have seen, however, this was not always possible given the limited number of linguists available in Portugal nor could they cover all the mediation needs. Earlier on, we de-constructed the argument that the Portuguese captured natives specifically to train them as interpreters, therefore it seems reasonable to deduce that in the fifteenth century, at the start of the Discoveries, the Portuguese

162 cf. Bouchon,G. and Thomaz, L.F.,*Voyage dans les Deltas du Gange et de l'Irraouaddy (1521),* Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian – Centro Cultural Português, 1988, p.45

paid relatively little attention to the recruitment and treatment of linguistic mediators. The captives were obviously considered inferior by the Portuguese, who ignored their needs and expectations[163]. The first known reference to any system of reward is found in Cadamosto's account in which he explains that the slaves taken as dragomen[164] on the exploration vessels will be manumitted after four voyages.

> *"todos os nossos navios tinham turgimãos pretos trazidos de Portugal, os quais turgimãos são escravos negros vendidos por aquele senhor de Senega aos primeiros cristãos portugueses que vieram descobrir o país dos Negros; os quais escravos se fizeram cristãos em Portugal, e aprenderam bem a língua hispânica; e tínhamo-los havido dos seus donos, com a retribuição e pagamento de lhes dar um escravo por cada um, a escolher em todo o nosso monte, pelo seu trabalho de turgimania: e, em dando cada um destes turgimãos ao seu dono 4 escravos, eles os deixam forros."*[165]

The qualities these captives interpreters possessed were having been converted to Christianity and learned Portuguese, but were not considered any more valuable than any other slave, for they were to be simply exchanged for another for each voyage they completed, whilst we know that by being given the perilous task of approaching the native Africans, their survival was frequently in jeopardy. Yet, at the same time, this system of manumission would appear to have been introduced at some point in the 1440's, possibly to prevent acts of betrayal such as recurrence of that which befell

163 An exception is perhaps the Arabic-speaking man of noble appearance taken in the first group of captives by Antão Gonçalves, whose aspiration to manumission is considered.

164 i.e. guides and interpreters

165 Cadamosto, op. cit, p.148. Our translation: "All our ships had black interpreters brought from Portugal, who were Negro slaves sold by that lord of Senega to the first Portuguese Christians who had discovered the Negroes' country; these slaves had become Christians in Portugal, and learned the Hispanic language well (Note: Portuguese language); and they had been taken from their owners, with the reward and payment of giving them a slave for each one, to be chosen from our lot, for their interpreting work: and when each of these interpreters gave his master 4 slaves, he would be set free."

Gonçalo de Sintra, triggered by the flight of his local guide. Nevertheless, as Castilho Pais[166] has pointed out, no other reference to this system of rewards has been discovered, therefore, we cannot claim that this was common practice, but may merely have been an arrangement that Cadamosto, who was after all a slave trader, devised to ensure provision of loyal interpreters.

Nevertheless, we also have the example of João Garrido[167], originally from Guinea, who was taken to Portugal and christened, but kept as a slave by Gonçalo Toscano in Lagos. He served as a guide and interpreter on several expeditions which went to his native Guinea. He was valued by the Court for these services and Prince John (the future King John II) on the eighteenth of August, 1477, gave him his freedom, according to Sousa Viterbo, in the hope that this would persuade him to return to Portugal, allowing the Portuguese to continue to use his services and also to prevent him from acting as informant to the local rulers in Guinea.

In conclusion, the captives who included those used as local guides and interpreters were at the very bottom of the hierarchy of those on board the discovery vessels. Just above them came the deported convicts, who were also used as the interpreters of first contact when they had some knowledge of another language or who could also be sent on reconnaissance missions, that is to say, they would be sent ashore to wander around and gather information through observation, returning to the ship within a matter of hours. In short, besides having to fight the enemy, they were charged with some of the most dangerous missions involving contact with the lands and peoples being visited. The same convicts could also be *lançados* in the sense that they would be sent ashore to explore, for a much longer period without returning to the same vessel, or decide themselves to abandon the voyage. Ultimately, their only reward for the services they provided, as members of the crew or as spies and interpreters was reprieve from a more severe sentence (the death penalty) or to have their sentences commuted (reduction of the period of banishment). There are also references to convicts having been pardoned,

166 cf. Castilho Pais, Carlos op. cit. p.37

167 cf. Sousa Viterbo, *Notícia de Alguns Arabistas e Intérpretes de Línguas Africanas e Orientaes*, Imprensa da Universidade, Coimbra 1906

in the light of exceptional service to the Crown in the Discoveries.

Another group forced to embark on these voyages as they were being banished from the realm were the New Christians, or Jewish converts, presumably also in alternative to a worse punishment. As many of them were gifted linguists, their specific value to the voyage was to act as *línguas.* A prime example is João Martins who served on Vasco da Gama's first voyage to India. He was the first man sent ashore in Calicut, on a spying mission and to purchase supplies, by virtue of his knowledge of languages (Arabic and Hebrew, which he spoke fluently) and his understanding of the local tongue[168]:

> *"Ao que mandou hum João Martins, degredado, que sabia falar arauia e hebraico, que era christão nouo e homem de subtil entendimento, que já entendia a fala do mouro mas a nom sabia falar: e falou com elle que fosse a terra com o mouro com dinheiro para comprar cousas de comer, e que olhasse bem toda a cidade, e o modo da gente, e ouvisse bem o que entendesse, e nom falasse nem respondesse."*[169]

This hazardous mission was made even more dangerous by the fact that Martins could only understand the local language and not speak it, thus risking detection. This was a task of enormous importance, as was Martins' duty to collect the hostages, who would ensure the Captain's safe passage to his meeting with the King of Calicut. Correia praises his intelligence, but does not comment on the performance of his assignments.

Therefore, once again, despite the sensitive tasks assigned them and their potential

168 One would presume that the language in question was the variety of Arabic spoken by Moslems in Calicut, for him to come to understand it relatively quickly.

169 Gaspar Correia, op. cit. Vol. I p.78. Our translation: "So he sent one João Martins, deportee, who could speak Arabic and Hebrew, who was a New Christian and a man with intelligence, who could already understand the local language but could not speak it: and he told him to go ashore with the Moor with money to buy food, and that he should take a good look at the city, what the people were like and listen carefully to what he could understand, and not speak or reply."

value as spies; informants and linguists, they were given scant motivation to remain loyal to the Portuguese, instead of attempting to escape and chancing their luck with the natives, be they pagans or Moslems. What is ironic is that when they did so, particularly but not exclusively in West Africa, they could fall into the graces of the local rulers, climb the social ladder of the host society and enjoy a privileged position at court, whilst of course their low social status of origin was not forgotten by the Europeans who wished to conduct trade with them nor Jesuit missionaries.

They are not the only examples of renegade linguists who were appreciated far more by the host societies than by the Portuguese. Some converted to Islam and married well, such as Diogo de Mesquita, interpreter and negotiator to Bahadur Shah, Sultan of Gujarat, who was succeeded in this role by João de Santiago. He changed religion and employer on several occasions, until he became Bahadur Shah's favourite and was rewarded with a substantial income. This contrast, therefore, suggests that becoming a *língua* with all the various roles that this term encompasses was not a means to improve one's condition in Portuguese society, since the social hierarchy was rather rigid and determined by factors such as religion and genealogy, whereas it would of course have been easier to ascend the scale through feats of valour on the battlefield. In addition, the low condition[170] of many of those engaged in linguistic mediation determined that would receive only a small reward for their services, something which, as we shall analyse below, frequently prompted a sense of umbrage.

What is clear is that in the first phase of the Discoveries, that is to say the ventures along the Atlantic coast of Africa during the fifteenth century, the Portuguese saw linguistic mediation as a function and did not attach a position or profession to this activity. In addition, as communication needs were often met in a rather improvised fashion during the first decades of the expansion, those who acted as interpreters were drafted in on the spot. The effect that this practice of using those who were on hand and offered their services had on quality and loyalty is a matter which we shall return to hereunder. Yet, as the Portuguese built their fortress and appointed factors to take charge of their commerce, so a more permanent need for interpreters arose and individuals

170 cf. Bouchon G. and Thomaz, L.F. op. cit. p. 45

would be assigned ot work as *lingoas* in a specific place: at a fortress; in a factory, or at the customs house. There were also those interpreters, of course, who were assigned to individual figures, in particular, to the Viceroy or Governor and the Captains. Regular payments were made to these interpreters, a stipend, which like all the others, was meticulously recorded in the accounts books kept in the factories. Simão Botelho's Book of 1554 records that there were a small number of interpreters of European origin, whose remuneration was vastly superior or that of local interpreters:

> *"Ao linguoa d'este Reyno, purtuguès, que se pagua no Rendimento d'esta alfandegua per hua prouisão d'elReey nosso senhor, passada pelo gouernador Martim Affonso, noue leques, que são quatrocentos e dezoito xerafins, treze çadis, que affazem cento e vinte cinquo mil quinhentos e nouenta reis, a rezão de setenta e cinquo azares por mês....*
>
> *Item - Ao linguoa d'alfandegua, bramene, setenta e cinquo azares e dous çadis e meio, que são trinta e cinquo xerafins, que ffazem dez mil e quinhentos reis..."*[171]

Where local interpreters are concerned, there is almost inevitably an additional note referring to their conversion to Christianity or not and trustworthiness, as though the former were a necessary condition for the latter, as seen in this reference to two interpreters employed at Daman in India :

171 Botelho, Simão, Tombo do Estado da Índia (1554), in Felner, Rodrigo José de Lima (ed.) *Collecção de Monumentos Inéditos para a História das Conquistas dos Portugueses em Africa, Asia e América, 1ª série História da Asia,* Lisboa, Academia Real das Sciencias, 1878, vol. 5, p.104. Our translation: "Entry – To the Kingdom's interpreter, Portuguese, by order of Our Lord and King, issued by Governor, Martim Afonso de Sousa, be paid from the Account of the Customs-House the sum of nine *leques,* which are four hundred and eighteen *xerafins,* thirteen *çadis,* which one hundred and twenty five thousand and ninety *reis*, which equals seventy four *azares* per month. Entry – To the Brahmin interpreter at the Customs-House be paid seventy five *azares* and two and a half *çadis*, which are thirty five *xerafins*, which make ten thusand five hundred *reis.*"

"O dito capitão tem huum lingoa que será christão e homem fiel e de recado, o qual averá vinte myl de seu ordenado e mantimento por anno.

A feytoria da dita fortaleza tem outro lingoa que será christão e de confiansa, o qual também servirá nallfandega e mandovy da dita cidade. Tem doze myl reis de seu ordenado e mantimento por anno...."[172]

It is worth noticing that one of them was assigned to the Captain and the other to the factory itself and the customs house[173], with a considerable differences in their salaries even amongst these local employees, the former earning almost double the salary of the latter.

Although, there appears to have been a preference for co-religionists because they were considered more loyal, as we can see, this did not altogether preclude many others from working as interpreters, including Jews or New Christians; hindus (of higher castes); muslims, and parsees. Initially, many of these mediators and informants would work sporadically for the Portuguese, or actually come into contact with them after having been recruited by local rulers to act as emissaries, but their faith did not exclude them from more permanent employment in the administration. We also note that linguistic mediators sent as ambassadors or emissaries (the rank and title they were attributed would vary) would often receive gifts from those they delivered their messages to and not just from the recruiting entity, a common practice among both

172 Apud. Teodoro de Matos, Artur *O Estado da Índia 1581-88: Estrutura Administrativa e Económica Alguns Elementos para o seu Estudo* Universidade dos Açores, Ponta Delgada 1982. Our translation: "The said captain has an interpreter who is a Christian and a loyal man who performs his tasks, who shall have an income and maintenance of twenty thousand per year. The factory of the said fortress has another interpreter who is a Christian and trustworthy, who shall serve the customs-house and payments office of the said city. He shall receive an income and maintenance of twelve thousand per year..."

173 The term *mandovy* (derived from the Konkani *mandvi*) is commonly defined as a customs tax, but here appears to indicate the place where the tax was paid.

Europeans and Asians and which is recorded in various contemporary documents, including Correia's *Lendas da Índia* and the *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque*.

The gradual consolidation of the Portuguese presence in India had various impacts on the activities undertaken by linguistic mediators and their conditions of employment. We shall mention two of the more salient here: the first phenomenon was that the number of regular interpreters attached to different entities increased, to also include judicial bodies such as the *ouvidor* (magistrate), as recorded in the 1592 accounts book of the fortress of Hormuz:

> *"Item, o lingoa do ouvidor tem sete mil e dozentos reis bij*
> *ij^{c} rs*
> *Item, o lingoa del Rey d'Oormuz tem nove leques por anno que*
> *fazem C xxb bl V -rs*
> *Item, o lingoa da alfandega tem dez mil e quinhentos reis por*
> *anno x L^{c} rs"*[174]

It is curious to note that the Portuguese paid the interpreter working for the King of Hormuz, but this could once again have been a ploy to ensure a certain loyalty, especially as there appears to have been a certain discord between the two sides concerning the appointment to this post.[175]

In general terms, not only can we infer a more structured approach to the recruitment and assignment of interpreters from the accounts of the sixteenth century, in a clear attempt to move away from the improvised, sporadic engagement of their

174 AHU, *Códice 500*, fl.104-110v. Our translation: "Entry, the magistrate's interpreter has seven thousand two hundred *reis*, Entry, the King of Hormuz's interpreter had nine *leques* per year,which make one hundred and twenty five thousand *reis*, Entry, the customs-house's interpreter has ten thousand fve hundred *reis* per year."

175 The King of Hormuz wrote to the King of Portugal with the following request: "*E asy o alcaide e linguoa que eu posa poer aqueles que me parecer que milhor o poderão fazer e que nom ajão custumes novos e maaos"*; ANTT, *Cartas dos Vice-reis*, nº 77. Our translation: "And likewise the governor and interpreter, that I may put those who seem the best to me in this duties and so that there are no new and bad customs." The year of the letter has been lost but would appear to have been in the first half of the sixteenth century.

services, but also the distribution of regular stipends that started to create a hierarchy amongst interpreters and between interpreters and other officials engaged by the *Estado da Índia*. Furthermore, the level of remuneration appears to have been determined on an individual and therefore somewhat random basis by the Viceroy. The following excerpt taken from the 1581 accounts book of the Portuguese fortresses is elucidating concerning the various levels of stipend: *"O lingoa dante o dito viso rey tem trinta e seys mil reis dordenado por anno."*[176]

Thus, the viceroy of Goa's interpreter's salary of thirty six mil-réis per year seems a rather paltry sum for such a sensitive position when compared to a captain's stipend of six hundred mil-réis per year, in other words, approximately seven per cent. This would suggest that the gulf in rewards separated Portuguese officers and locally-recruited workers. Another interesting comparison can be made between the salary of the *capitão*'s interpreter, the officer in charge of the fortress, and that of the *alveitar*, a kind of untrained veterinarian, which were the same. From a twenty-first century standpoint, this seems strange, for the interpreter was undoubtedly someone that the captain would need to trust, as he would be privy to confidential information and undertake delicate mediation tasks. We should, however, not reject the idea that the *lingoa* could, like those who were sent on mission, complement his stipend with commissions from the various entities he interacted with and whose interests he could promote, by dint of the position he was in. Nevertheless, it is striking that the Captain's interpreter's salary should be lower by comparison than the *lingoas*, who worked in Goa for the Catholic church, who in this case were also paid from the State coffers:

> *"A cada huma destas seys igreijas he ordenado huum lingoa pera declararem aos cristãos novamente convertidos à doctrina e outras cousas necessarias que averão huum pardao douro cada huum por mês enquanto forem necessarios. Monta por anno vinte*

176 Apud. Teodoro de Matos, Artur *O Estado da Índia 1581-88: Estrutura Administrativa e Económica Alguns Elementos para o seu Estudo* Universidade dos Açores, Ponta Delgada 1982. Ourtranslation: "The viceroy's interpreter is paid an income of thirty six *mil-réis* per year."

e çinquo myl novecentos e vinte reis.''[177]

There are few records of the commissions paid to Portuguese ambassadors and emissaries by foreign rulers, especially to those who were sent on such missions by virtue of their linguistic skills, although it is not unreasonable to assume that they would have received gifts, in view of the example we have of the King of Hormuz's present to ambassador Miguel Ferreira[178] and the fact that the Portuguese regularly offered gifts to visiting emissaries and mediators, especially when deemed to have rendered service. This was the case of Cidi Alle, the interpreter of Malik Ayaz, Governor of Diu, who is credited by Correia with having saved the Portuguese prisoners taken at the 1508 battle of Chaul, Gujarati[179], and negotiating their release, ensuring that they were not handed over to the Turks or sent as trophies to the Sultan of Cairo, actions for which he was rewarded by Viceroy Almeida:

> *''mandamos que des a cidi alle baci amdaluz quatrocemtos cruzados que em nome delRei meu senhor lhe faço merce, porque guardou, he agasalhou, he emparou os christaãos que foram catiuos em chaull em casa de mullqiaz, he por seu respeito hos name mataram nem entregaram aos Rumes, nem venderam por muito dinheiro''*[180]

Interpreters were also employed by the Inquisition in Goa, which was established

177 Idem. Our translation: "A *lingoa* is ordered to each of these six churches to declare the doctrine and other necessary things to the newly-converted Christians, each of them shall have a gold pardao a month, for as long as they are needed. Annual amount twenty five thousand, nine hundred and twenty reis."

178 cf. Gaspar Correia, vol. II, p.417

179 cf. Bouchon, Geneviève *Pionniers Oubliés: Les Interprètes Portugais en Asie dans les Premières Années du XVI siècle* in *Inde Découverte, Inde Retrouvée 1498-1630,* Comissão Nacional para os Descobrimentos Portugueses, Lisbon-Paris 1999

180 cf. CAA II, p.429 Our translation: "We order that Cidi Alle Andalusian be given four hundred cruzados on behalf of the King my Lord to reward him, because he kept and looked after and protected the Christians taken captive at Chaul in Malik Ayaz's house and through respect for him they did not kill them or deliver them to the Turks, nor sell them for a large sum of money."

in 1560 and functioned until 1812 (except for a four year interlude in the 1770's when it was abolished by the Portuguese Prime-minister, the Marquis of Pombal, before being restored following his removal from office). The interpreters were included in the category known as *naiques*[181] and were subordinates of the local commissioners. Their levels of remuneration suggest that they were not highly valued by the Portuguese and we cannot ignore the fact that the interpreter's role would hardly be essential in ecclesiastical authorities' eyes, as he would be assisting the defendant in a hearing with a predetermined outcome. However, as this was a post reserved for local Christians, they themselves viewed this appointment as a form of social ascension, for they would be connected to one of the strongest institutions in the territory.[182] The *topazes* who worked for the Jesuits were generally paid a small retainer for their work, when not members of the Society, although their employers were always concerned about the cost that this represented, knowing that at the same time, they could not match the earning potential for those who acted in the commercial field. Others appear to have had the status of slaves or servants, since it transpires from correspondence from the advisor to the King of Kotte that *topazes* could be bought and sold:

> *"Senhor a perto de dous anos que el rey mamdou daqui um portugues com huma manilha e cartas pera o senhor governador que trouxe as cartas do senhor governador pera este rey que arriba diguo que foram dadas a el rey da Cota. Por este portugues mamdey um collarynho pera m'aver por elle hum topaz que dezyam vemdia hum Antonio Saraiva."*[183]

181 A term used to denote a low-rank civil servant in Portuguese India, derived from the Sanskrit word, *nayaka*, seemingly meaning leader.

182 cf. Feilter, Bruno *A Delegação de Poderes Inquisitoriais:o exemplo de Goa atraves da Documentação na Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro* Tempo vol.12 no.24, Niterói 2008. Accessed at: http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S1413-77042008000100007&script=sci_arttext&tlng=pt on 31 December 2013.

183 Sanceau, E. Lalande, M. (eds.) Collecção de São Lourenço III, Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1973, Letter from Nuno Alvares Pereira to the Magistrate Francisco Alvares, Kandy, 12.9.1545, p.4. Our translation: "Sir, about two years ago, the king sent a Portuguese man from here with an anklet and letters for the Governor, who brought back the letters from the Governor to this king and which as I said were given to the King of Kotte. I sent a necklace with him to get myself a

The second phenomenon which we shall briefly discuss is the creation of the post of state interpreter *lingoa do Estado* in India and also in the strongholds in North Africa, in the first half of the sixteenth century, where the appointments were made directly by the King. The occupants of these positions were incorporated into the Portuguese overseas administration. In addition to paying stipends to these officials, the Portuguese also used various other methods to guarantee the allegiance of their interpreters: these included attributing the post of interpreter *ad vitam* and then allowing it to be handed on to the next generation of the same family, thereby binding them to the administration. A good example of this practice comes from Goa where certain noble Hindu families stayed in the position of *lingoas* for many years: Dos Mártires Lopes identifies the Vaga and Dumó families in particular, the former having held the post for over one hundred years, spanning three generations and becoming known as the family of State interpreters.[184]. When António Mendes de Oliveira, the *lingoa* of Hormuz, died in office, his widow successsfully appealed to King Sebastian for the post to be inherited by his son. Families of interpreters were not a complete guarantee, though. Crisna was a Brahmin praised and rewarded by Afonso d'Albuquerque for having together with *"Yocef"* (Alexandre d'Ataíde) helped to recover tax revenue for the Crown, which was being spirited away by villages leaders.[185] His son, Dadagi, was appointed the Governor's interpreter following an audience with the King in Portugal, but aroused suspicion, since he refused to convert as he had promised, and thus incurred the wrath of the religious orders, who saw in him a strong adversary to their mission accusing him of spying.[186]

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topaz with it, which one Antonio Saraiva was said to be selling.

184 Dos Mártires Lopes, Maria de Jesus *Goa Setecentista, Tradição e Modernidade,* CEPCEP, 1999.

185 cf. CAA vol. VI p. 155-6 (30.10.1514) . "*por fazerem aleuantar a rremda das orraquas e negocearem e trazerem a boa decraraçã a dita remda que amdaua escomdyda e sonegada e por via dallças as quaes lhe seram paguas nos gancares."* Our translation: "For having collected the tax on coconut spirit and negotiating and bringing the correct declaration, the said income was hidden, through bribes paid to the village chiefs."

186 cf. DI I, p.69 Letter from Miguel Vaz to Dom João III, late 1545 and DI I, p.744-5, Letter from Pedro Fernandes Sardinha to Dom João III, late 1549: *"O bramene mais prejudicial e contrairo há christandade de Goa hé Dadagi, filho de Crisnaa, que quá veyo a este Reino e recebeo muitas mercês e omrras d'el-Rey dom Manuel, voso padre, que sancta gloria aja, e lhe prometeo de ser christão*

There was the possibility of offering social promotion: Dos Mártires Lopes gives the example of being allowed to wear a hat.[187] This would act as a visible sign of their importance or at least the role of these interpreters within the administration, their connection to the ruling class, and may have had as much significance for them as their level of monetary remuneration given the fact that they hailed from wealthy families. There was the possibility of offering social promotion: Dos Mártires Lopes gives the example of being allowed to wear a hat.[188] This would act as a visible sign of their importance or at least the role of these interpreters within the administration, their connection to the ruling class, and may have had as much signficance for them as their level of monetary remuneration given the fact that they hailed from wealthy families.

For his part, Afzal[189] reports that the Portuguese placed full trust in Hindu interpreters from good Brahmin families, also pointing to the almost hereditary nature of the post of *língua do Estado* or State Interpreter. As they proved their loyalty, so the recognition and rewards gradually increased. The Sinai Cottari family served the Portuguese over several generations in this post, with Ramogi Sinai Cottari standing out for having undertaken various diplomatic missions with extreme diligence, during a career spanning some thirty years in the mid-seventeenth century.[190] On account of his

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tamto que tornase há India, com toda sua familia, por cujo respeito lhe foy feito mercê do oficio de tanadar-moor e limgoa do Governador em sua vida, e elle nunqua se fez christão, antes elle e o filho sam os mores adversarios da nosa sancta fee que há em Goa." Our translation: "The main Brahmin opponent who does most damage to Christianity in Goa is Dadagi, Crisna's son, who came here to this kingdom and received many rewards and honours from your father, King Manuel, may he rest in holy glory, and promised him that he and all his family would become Christians as soon as he returned to India, out of respect for whom he was rewarded with the post of chief tax-collector and *limgoa* to the Governor for the rest of his life, and he never became a Christian, rather he and his son are the greatest adversaries of our holy faith in Goa."

The words used in the two letters are rather similar, but the latter was written four years after the former, revealing that the clergy had not managed to convince the king.

187 idem, p.113.

188 idem, p.113.

189 cf.Afzal, Ahmed op. cit. p.93

190 cf. Pissurlencar, Panduronga *Agentes da Diplomacia Portuguesa na Índia* Tipografia Rangel, Goa 1952, pp. 22-23

excellent service, the Viceroy appointed him to the post of *corretor mor* (chief of clearance) of the Goa customs house for a period of three years, with an annual income of four hundred *xerafins.*[191] This was a rare recompense for a Hindu, but in fact, he had also been exempted from a law which obliged Hindus living in Portuguese territory to convert to Catholicism. In all of these cases, however, we must not overlook the fact that these wealthy families also helped to finance the *Estado da Índia* by advancing significant funds. Therefore, the acknowledgment of their services did not just pertain to mediation activities, but also to their role as creditors.

In conclusion, the Portuguese authorities of the *Estado da Índia* paid increasing attention to their interpreters over the course of time, as their need to communicate with local communities became more systematic and complex. The increase in benefits and recognition is a reflection of a stabler presence in India; a tribute to greater professionalism among interpreters and the conscientiousness with which they conducted their duties, in addition to the loyalty shown through their willingness to lend funds to the cash-strapped authorities. The improved treatment of interpreters also reflects a more general trend of a move away from military to administrative contacts, of greater interaction with the local Indian community and a distinction between the local elite, who were acculturated to a certain extent (but not entirely, as they were not necessarily forced to convert to Catholicism) and the rest of the population. At the same time, it was also recognition that the reliance on slave or *ad hoc* mediators, of whose background; skills and ethics they knew very little or nothing was inappropriate and had, on numerous occasions, not produced the desired results.

3.2 DEVELOPING A RELATIONSHIP OF TRUST?

3.2.1 The Influence of the Portuguese Psyche

191 cf. Pissurlencar, P. op. cit. p.36 A *Xerafim* (the name is derived from the Persian or Arabic words for noble, *Ashrafi* or *sharafi)* was the name given to a gold and subsequently silver coin equivalent to the *pardau* and with an approximate value of initially 300 and then 360 *réis*, thus the income from the post at the customs house was probably to the tune of 120 to 140 *mil-réis.* (cf. Saldanha, Manuel José Gabriel *História de Goa: Política e Arqueologia* Asian Educational Services, 1925)

In an earlier section, we referred to the linguistic and cultural mishaps and misunderstandings that occurred during the voyages of Discovery, but once regular contact had been established with a community, in particular, once the Portuguese had reached India and had identified more clearly their linguistic needs, their main concern was to ensure the loyalty of their linguistic mediators and this is indeed why there was a need to ensure that they were adequately compensated for their work. Accordingly, it is crucial that we analyse the interpreters' sentiments towards their treatment by the Portuguese, firstly by studying their behaviour (although we must not overlook the authorship of such commentaries, as this will heavily influence the way in which such behaviour is described) and then by analysing some of the documents produced by interpreters themselves in which they refer to and largely complain about their condition.

The origin of the figure of linguistic and cultural mediator explains the difficult relationship the Portuguese so often had with them during the Age of Discoveries. Apart from the small number of native Portuguese who spoke Arabic, most *lingoas* started out as informants or spies, insofar as this was the role ascribed them. The Portuguese were well aware of the fact that the people they came into contact with would also try to spy on them and use informants, as stated by Zurara:

> *"A quinta, quando nossos inimigos certa lingua hão do nosso poder e vontade, devemo-nos muito guardar de fazer entrada em sua terra; que a principal cousa que o Capitão deve de fazer acerca de seus inimigos, assim é encobrir-lhe seu poder"*[192]

As Bouchon has stated, the fact that the mediators had access to another language, culture and mentality aroused this jealousy and fear among the explorers, for they possessed knowledge that was inaccessible and mysterious to them. This could actually

192 cf. Zurara, op. cit. p. 137. Our translation: The fifth, when our enemies have some information about our power and intentions, we should be wary of going ashore on their land; the main thing that the Captain should do about his enemies is therefore to hide his power from them.

have led the navigators not only to suspect the non-Portuguese ones but also to mistreat them, for we know from various contemporary sources that neither Vasco da Gama nor Afonso de Albuquerque had a high opinion of *lingoas.*

Da Gama, for example, included two linguists among his crew, Martim Afonso, for African languages and Fernão Martins, for Arabic. Castilho Pais states that Martim Affonso came from the Congo, but the various editions of the manuscripts containing the log of the expedition, whose authorship has been widely attributed to Álvaro Velho, are quite clear that he had sojourned there: *"E o capitam-moor mandou sajr em terra huu Martim Affonso que andou em Manicongo muito tempo."*[193]

Furthermore, he is identified as being of Portuguese and not Congolese origin by Castanheda, who calls him *one of ours*:

> *"E vendo Vasco da Gama que mostravam ser gente mansa, mandou subir em terra um dos nossos, chamado Martim Afonso, que sabia muitas linguas de negros,"*[194]

Fernão Martins is only mentioned by name much later in the aforesaid text, but is presumably the sailor who can understand Arabic from having been a prisoner in a Moorish jail (presumably in North Africa):*"E tudo isto entendia huu marinheiro que o capitam-moor levava o qual já fora cativo de mouros e portanto entendia estes que aquy achamos."*[195] In addition, from the description of his duties as a messenger, we can deduce that his scribe, Diogo Dias, also understood Arabic. Thus, Vasco da Gama's

193 cf. Köpke, Diogo and Paiva, António da Costa *Roteiro de viagem que em descobrimento da Índia pelo cabo da Boa Esperança fez D. Vasco da Gama* Typographia Commercial Portuense, 1838. Our translation: "And the Captain-of- the Fleet sent Martim Affonso ashore who had spent a long time in Manicongo."

194 Castanheda (liv I, cap IV, p.16), op. cit. Our translation: "And Vasco da Gama seeing that they appeared to be calm people, sent one of our men ashore, called Martim Afonso, who knew many Negroes' languages."

195 cf. Köpke, D. and Paiva, A., op. cit. p.25.Our translation: "And this was all understood by a sailor brought along by the Captain-of-the-Fleet, who had been imprisoned by the Moors and thus understood these ones who we had come across."

expedition had native Portuguese linguists, in addition to native Africans[196], suggesting that on the one hand, he was conscious of communication needs and that on the other, he did not intend to rely on the capture of natives to act as informants. In addition, he had his royal credentials translated in advance into Arabic before he set off on the voyage to India. All of these preparations indicate that he wished to avoid having to rely on local Moslem *lingoas*. Furthermore, much has been written of the attempted treachery by the Moorish pilot, sent by the ruler of the Island of Mozambique, motivated according to Álvaro Velho by his having discovered them to be Christians:

> *"E depois que souberam que nos eramos xrstãoos ordenaram de nos tomarem e matarem a treição mas o piloto seu que connosco levavamos nos descobrio todo o que elles hordenavam de fazer contra nos se o puderam poer em obra."*[197]

This episode has also been immortalised in Camoens' poem *The Lusiads* which depicts this confrontation as a dispute between righteous Christians and perfidious Moors.[198]

Hence, unsurprisingly, we can observe a stark contrast between on the one hand the concern Gama shows for Martim Afonso's safety (he only sends him ashore once he ascertains the amiable intentions of the natives) and subsequently his choice of Fernão Martins to be one of the two men allowed to accompany him in his second audience with the King of Calicut:*"E o capitam dise que queria que emtrase com elle Fernam Martinz o que sabia falar, e o seu escripvam"*[199] and on the other his disdain, according

196 cf. Correia, Gaspar op. cit. Vol. I, p. 273. Gaspar Correia refers to one of the captains, Pero Afonso de Aguiar, sending a mam from Mozambique who already knew Portuguese ashore to request an audience with the King of Sofala.

197 cf. Köpke, D. and Paiva, A, op. cit., p.29. Our translation: "And once they had found out that we were Christians they gave orders to capture us and kill us for treason, but their pilot who we had taken on board told us everything they had planned to do against us if they could put it into practice."

198 cf. Song I Verse 70 and following.

199 Ibid, p.65. Our translation: "And the Captain said that he wanted Fernam Martinz to go in with him, as he knew the language, and his scribe."

to Castanheda's account, towards the local *lingoas* proposed by the King. In their first meeting, which was Gama's first encounter with an Indian ruler, an unexpected difficuly arose, for the sovereign did not speak Arabic but Malayalam. Vasco da Gama, who did not have an interpreter for that language, refused to have his credentials translated by the Moslems suggested by the King:

> *"Dise o Capitam que lhe pedia por mercê porquanto os mouros lhe queriam mall e nam aviam de dizer senam o contrario, que mandase chamar hu xrstam que soubese fallar arravia dos mouros.*"[200]

In the end, the said Christian did not understand the North African dialect of Arabic which was quite different to the Arabic spoken in the Indian Ocean region,[201] so the letter had to be sight translated by Moslem linguists. According to Castanheda (although there is no mention of this in Álvaro Velho), da Gama accepted somewhat reluctantly but insisted that a Moor from North Africa who spoke Castilian, who he had already met, should be one of the translators, as he considers him more trustworthy: *"E vendo Vasco da gama que a auião de ler mouros, pedio a el rey q fosse Bõtaibo hu deles, & isto por lhe parecer que falaria mais verdade q os outros pelo conhecimento que tinha coele."*[202] The same suspicion of Moslem interpreters was shared by the crew of Pedro Alvares Cabral's expedition:

> *"O Interprete que fallava por nós era Arabe, de modo que não se podia fallar ao Rei, sem se meterem Mouros de permeio, que são uma gente má e muito nossa contraria; que a todo o instante*

200 Ibid. p.66 Our translation: "The Captain said that he implored him that as the Moors wished him ill and would only say the opposite, that he call for a Christian who knew how to speak the local Arabic."

201 cf. Bouchon, Geneviève *Vasco da Gama* Terramar, Lisbon 1998 p.146.

202 Castanheda, vol. I, p.52. Our translation: "And as Vasco da Gama saw that Moors would read it, he asked the King for Bontaibo to be one of them, because he believed that he would speak more truthfully than the others as he already knew him."

usavam de embustes"[203]

suggesting that they may have been responsible for the protracted negotiations which ended in open conflict.

Last but certainly not least, we have the example of Gaspar da Gama. As mentioned previously, he was to become the most famous of all the interpreters who worked for the Portuguese navigators, Vasco da Gama and the first governors of India, Dom Francisco de Almeida and Afonso de Albuquerque, in particular. He is referred to on numerous occasions by contemporary chroniclers, especially Gaspar Correia, and his patrons. His initial encounter with the Portuguese when he came aboard one of their vessels, however, epitomises the reactions that Gama had towards the pagans that approached him. Gaspar, who addressed the Portuguese in a Venetian dialect (which being sailors they were able to understand), demonstrated his wish to help them and join the expedition. According to Álvaro Velho[204], he started out by claiming that he was a Christian from the Levant, but Gama's suspicion was aroused and so ordered him to be flogged to extract the truth from him. Gama's intuition in this case proved to be sound, for Gaspar had been sent by the rich Moslem he worked for to spy and conceive a way of appropriating the ships.

By way of conclusion, we can detect a pattern in Gama's attitude towards the linguistic mediators, whereby he shows greater faith in Christian Portuguese interpreters and those with whom he can find a connection, such as Bontaibo who he had already met, the local Christian, on the basis of their shared creed, or indeed the native African participating in the expedition, as opposed to those who embodied the Other, namely that were indicated by the other party and who were Moslems. From his reactions, we can glean that he considered *lingoas* to be closer to spies than interpreters, so they either

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203 "Navegação do Capitão Pedro Alvares Cabral escrita por hum Piloto Portuguez" in *Colecção de Notícias para a História e Geografia das Nações Ultramarinas que vivem nos domínios portugueses ou lhe são vizinhos, tomo 2º,* Lisbon 1812, p.124. Our translation: "The interpreter who spoke for us was an Arab, thus we could not talk to the King, without Moslems getting in between. They are bad people and very much our enemies; and use deception all the time."

204 cf. Köpke, D. and Paiva, A., op. cit. p. 97

worked for or against him. The concept of the neutral mediator, someone whose position was somewhere between the Self and the Other and who could be loyal to both parties, to the act of communication *per se*, was simply not assimilated by him.

We can see a similar trend in the behaviour of Afonso de Albuquerque, who was appointed the second governor of India in 1509, after a long and distinguished military career in North Africa and six years' service in India. He was well-known for his irascible nature and rule with an iron fist. He had many fallings-out with other seafarers and nobles and frequent complaints were made about him to King Manuel. Linguistic mediators, whether Portuguese or not, did not escape his wrath and suspicion either. Duarte Barbosa was one of many serving in India who wrote to the King with his grievances, as did other *lingoas*, who we shall mention below.

Barbosa had travelled to India at the age of twenty and was extremely well-integrated into the local community; Oliveira e Costa and Lacerda call him "one of the first examples of interculturality, part of the group of Portuguese who interacted with Asia"[205] He began his interpreting activities early on his stay, acting as the mediator between Francisco de Albuquerque (Afonso's cousin) and the Rajah of Cannanore in 1503. He was accused of siding more with the locals than with the Portuguese administration, indeed in the book he subsequently wrote in the mid-1520's about trading opportunities and Indian culture *(O Livro de Duarte Barbosa)* certain statements denounce his proximity to the local inhabitants, whereby he reveals that he spoke to them frequently to learn more about their culture. In fact, even though the book was written years after the events occurred, one cannot help but notice the progressive change in his attitude towards his fellow countrymen. Initially, he refers to them as, *"a nossa gente"* (our people) or *"nós"* (we/us), but later on in his text, he more commonly refers to the Portuguese in the third person plural or by using the term *"os portugueses"*, suggesting that he had distanced himself from them. Unsurprisingly, therefore, he had a tense relationship with his superiors and was removed from his post as factor in Cannanore and transferred to Calicut by Afonso de Albuquerque, despite having been called upon shortly before to help in the attempts to convert the King of

205 Oliveira e Costa J.P. and Lacerda, T., op. cit.p. 60 (our translation)

Cochin. The Governor considered that it was his fluency in the local language and culture that were behind his trouble-making: *"e asy tiro Barbosa de Cannanore porque ele he lyngua e causa de todas estas revoltas."*[206]

He was equally suspicious of another well-documented interpreter, Francisco d'Albuquerque, who was one of two Jews captured by Simão Martins on an Arabian trading vessel, *"huma não de Meca muy riqua"* [207] and brought to Cannanore. Francisco immediately converted to Christianity, with Afonso de Albuquerque becoming his godfather, hence the shared surname. He and his companion, described as very wealthy Castilian Jews by Correia, provided the Portuguese with a great deal of useful information on both their enemies and on the progress of João Gomes in his quest to find Prester John. It appears that his origins and his willingness to use information to further his own interests were never forgotten by Afonso de Albuquerque. Bouchon reports that Afonso was uneasy with the knowledge that he had acquired through accompanying him and kept him under permanent supervision for fear of betrayal. When Afonso could not repay him a loan, he had him imprisoned in irons for five months, supposedly to prevent him from offering his services to the enemy[208], a concern that was not ungrounded, for as we shall comment below this threat had already been made by Francisco.

The third example that we shall examine is that of Cidi Alle, already discovered by several historians of Portuguese India, including Bouchon, but whose interaction with the Portuguese and Afonso de Albuquerque in particular, was not fully analysed in her study. Far from being the episodic mediator who intervenes to save the Portuguese prisoners taken at the 1508 battle of Chaul, only to disappear again, he acted regularly as a messenger between the King of Cambay and the Portuguese, for a period of at least a dozen years. For Albuquerque, not only was he a spy, who took advantage of his linguistic skills to collect information, but was also deceitful, deliberately telling falsehoods to his local paymasters, with the effect of stirring animosity towards the

206 cf. CAA vol I. p.134. Our translation: "and so he removed Barbosa from Cannanore because he is a *lyngua* and is the cause of all these revolts."

207 Correia, Gaspar, op. cit., vol. I, p. 134.

208 cf. Bouchon, G. op. cit.

Portuguese. His activities were of sufficient concern to Albuquerque to warrant being mentioned in at least two of the reports that the Governor sent to King Manuel:

> *"Nestes dias chegou ho outro cidialle, embaxador que foy del Rey de cambaya, tam mao homem como estoutro, (...) estes dous cidiales sam muito maos homeens, sabem a nosa limguajem, sam mais danosos amtre nós que purtugueses danados; mamdan os quá amtre nós por misijeiros, e também por saberem de nós mais cousas das que eu queria que eles soubesem; e porque sabem a nosa limguajem, dizem às vezes lá hua verdade e meia duzia d emganos misturados com ella, a que lhe dam fee;"*[209]

Ironically, Cidi Alle was also a useful informant and messenger for Albuquerque, who regularly entrusted him with replies to the King of Cambay, offering him substantial recompense for his services, as did Viceroy Almeida before him, according to the following entry dated 14 October 1513:

> *"mãdo que des a cide ale embaixador dell Rey de Cambaya hu colar douro de mella que pesa setemta cruzados de que em nome da sua alteza lhe faço merce."*[210]

We should not ignore the fact that neither Cide Alle nor Duarte Barbosa figure prominently in the historical account of events written by Afonso de Albuquerque's son, Brás de Albuquerque, which is based largely on the governor's collection of letters.

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209 CAA, vol. I, p.334. Our translation: "The other Cidi Alle arrived a few days ago, the one who was the King of Cambay's Ambassador, and who is just as bad as the other one, (…) these two Cidi Alles are very bad men, they know our language, and cause more trouble for us than Portuguese renegades: they send them here as messengers, and also to know more things than what I would like them to know; and because they know our language, sometimes they report back one truth and half a dozen lies mixed in, and they are believed."

210 Idem, vol. V, p.446. Our translation: "I order you to give Cidi Ale, Ambassador of the King of Cambay, a gold chain which weighs seventy cruzados and which I bestow on him on behalf of his Highness."

Furthermore, the damning opinions that Afonso had of them were completely ignored by Bras, which helps explain why twentieth century historians also focused predominantly on the positive characteristics of these and other similar figures.

3.2.2 Interpreter Behaviour

We shall now turn our attention to the way in which mediators' behaviour influenced the opinions that the Portuguese had of them and their relationships. Given the pedagogical and informative objective of contemporary chronicles, Vasco da Gama; Afonso de Albuquerque and their contemporaries would presumably have heard or even read of the experiences of their predecessors, such as the episode of Gonçalo de Sintra in the royal chronicle of Guinea, completed in the early 1460's, and the activities of the *lançados* or *tangomaus* in West Africa, in addition to other episodes of treachery whose traces have been lost over the past five centuries. Furthermore, throughout the fifteenth century, the Portuguese had undertaken military campaigns against the Moors in North Africa, thus the position of the Moslem as the archetypal enemy was strong in their minds. Past and direct experience with mediators, especially in Islamic lands, would have engendered their innate mistrust. Being on the fringes of society, these mediators regularly crossed the divide, firstly favouring one side and then the other; both at the same time, or quite simply, their own personal interests. They also appeared to change their identity, adding to the doubts concerning their trustworthiness or otherwise.

We have already discussed the fact that many Portuguese deserted and entered the military service of local potentates, the so-called renegades, one of whose functions was to provide information to the enemy about the Portuguese forces. They were considered despicable and if captured were subjected to a cruel execution or amputations, especially if they had converted to Islam. Many of them would have been forced, or at least claimed to have been forced to apostatise, but for the mentality of the time, honourable servants of King and Christ would rather be slain than convert. Furthermore, when sent as messengers by the enemy, the renegades would mock the Portuguese; the King; the Christian faith, and encourage others to join them, not revealing any semblance of reluctance to convert:

"O Gouernador estaua muy magoado d'estes arrenegados que lhe fogião, e mais erão tão máos que quando vinhão messigeiros, elles vinhão com elles a cauallo, vestidos como mouros, e corrião e folgauão, e dizião aos nossos que nom fossem paruos, que nom leuassem má vida, e se fossem pera o Hidalcão, que lhe daua muyto soldo e fazia muytas honras; e com ysto falauão vilezas contra nossa santa fé, e contra ElRey e contra o Gouernador"[211]

Evidently, they were particularly effective as vehicles of propaganda and messengers because they were native Portuguese. Such desertions were often driven by hunger and hardship, but mediators who owed their skills to an inter-cultural background could be seen for this very reason as a high-risk group for defection, as demonstrated by the example of João Navarro[212] in Castanheda's account:

"E andando nisto veyo da terra firme Diogo Fernãdes, ho adail que fora com a embaixada ao hidalcão, sobre que soltasse a el rey as tanadarias da terra firme em que se não tomou nenhua cõcrusam: assi polo hidalcão não querer, como por auer desconcerto antre Diogo fernãdez e Ião nauarro q hia por sua lingoa, por mil desmãchos que lá fez, até dizer que era neto do Turco, & queria ficar com o hidalcão. E coisto fugio pola terra firme adetro, & tornou-se mouro."[213]

211 Gaspar Correia, op. cit. Vol. II p.111. Our translation: "The Governor was very hurt by these renegades who deserted him, and moreover they were so bad that when messengers were sent, they would come with them on horseback, dressed as Moslems, and would run and make merry, and tell our men not to be stupid, to side with Idal Khan, who would pay them well and reward them; and they would also say obscenities about our holy faith; the King and the Governor:"

212 Incidentally, Gaspar Correia calls him Pedro Navarro, but they are one and the same.

213 Castanheda, Fernão Lopes de, op. cit. Vol. III, p. 238. Our translation: "And then Diogo Fernandes came back from the mainland, the leader of the Embassy to Idal Khan regarding giving the king tax collected on the mainland on which no conclusion was reached: this was because Idal Khan did not want to, as well as because there were disagreements between Diogo Fernandes and João Navarro, who went as his *lingoa*, because of a thousand disorders he caused there, including saying that he was the grandson of the Turk, & wanted to stay with Idal Khan. And he promptly ran off inland

In the opinion of Sousa Coutinho, a Portuguese army captain who wrote an eye-witness account of the Siege of Diu, it was also Antonio Faleiro's knowledge of Arabic and Moslem customs and his taste for their company and friendship that led him to giving poor counsel to Francisco Pacheco, by advising him to surrender to the Turkish enemy, whilst the remaining soldiers continued to defend the fort despite their suffering:

> *"Este dito Antonio Faleiro teve sempre estreita amisade com mouros, e seus costumes lhe eram mui agradaveis, e as mais vezes, os achariam em sua companhia: fallava bem suas linguagens por meio das quaes veiu o triste a poder-se dizer por elle que induzira seus companheiros a tão torpe preiteisia: com quanto o dito baluarte fôra impossivel defender-se longamente e sem duvida se este não fôra com suas exhortações Francisco Pacheco soffrera seu temor e acabar como devia sem deixar nome de participante neste negocio."*[214]

Whilst blood ties or cultural affinity with the enemy were warning signals, religious conversion, as the ultimate symbol of assimilation and thus loyalty to new masters was used to allay fears of betrayal, as Assmann writes:

> *"religion is generally held to be the most forceful promoter and expression of cultural identity, unity and specificity... Assimiliation, the giving up of a traditional cultural identity in favour of a dominating culture, is necessarily accompanied by*

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and became a Moslem."

214 Sousa Coutinho, Lopo de *Historia do Cerco de Diu*, Bibliotheca de Classicos Portuguzes, 1890, p. 159. Our translation: "The said Antonio Faleiro always kept a close friendship with Moslems, and he loved their customs, and sometimes, he would be found in their company: he spoke their languages well and through them, the unfortunate came, one could say through him to lead his companions to such an unwise covenant: thus it became impossible to defend the bastion for long, undoubtedly were it not for his exhortations, Francisco Pacheco would not have felt fear and would have gone on to the end, without his name being associated with this affair."

religious conversion, and religion is universally recognised as the strongest bastion against assimilation."[215]

This explains why it was so important to the Portuguese that Moslem interpreters abandon their faith and that their albeit coercive apostasies warrant a reference in coeval records, along with the repudiation of apostate Portuguese mercenaries. Chroniclers frequently recorded denial by apostates of having truly abandoned the Christian faith and that the outward symbols of cultural and religious assimilation were merely to ensure survival. Nevertheless, one can understand the suspicion with which they were treated, as conversions and allegiances therefore seemed only temporary and could be reverted in order to take advantage of a change in circumstances.

According to Castanheda, for example, João Machado's warnings were at first scorned, for the Portuguese believed that he was helping Pulat Khan in laying a trap for them.[216] Another talented linguist, João de Borba, who had worked as an interpreter in Goa, joined a band of renegades led by Rafael de Perestrelo operating in the kingdom of Pegu, who dressed in local style (although there is no reference in the sources consulted to his religion) and would seize and imprison the Portuguese. He was instrumental in mounting opposition to the official Portuguese embassy to the King of Pegu led by António de Brito.[217]

One of the reasons for crossing the divide was to try and escape punishment for crimes committed in another part of the East, generating, for example, the communities of merchant-adventurers which sprang up along the East coast of the Bay of Bengal. Those who converted to Christianity and joined the Portuguese could also have had the same motives as the King of Kotte bitterly complained: *"eles nam se fazem chrispãos senão quando matão outro ou lhe furtão o seu e se fazem outras culpas desta calydade pertemcemtes a mynha coroa e com medo se fazem chrispãos."*[218]

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215 Assmann, Jan *Translating Gods in* Ed. Budick, Sanford & Iser, Wolfgang *The Translatability of Cultures – Figurations of the Space Between* Stanford University Press, 1996, p.28

216 cf. Castanheda, vol. III, Chapter XXII.

217 cf. Bouchon, G. and Thomaz, L.F., op. cit.

218 King Bhuvanekabahu's Letter of 1545 to the Viceroy of India (original in Portuguese), apud.

Failing to reveal the truth of their circumstances appears to have been common among those who came to act as *lingoas* for the Portuguese. When they first visited Vasco da Gama's fleet, both Bontaibo and Gaspar da Gama were to all intents and purposes and according to Castanheda and Álvaro Velho, Moslem spies. The earlier account suggests that Bontaibo won some breathing space by attempting to please the crew with some phrases in Portuguese:

> *"veio com elle huu daquelles mouros o quall tanto que foy em os navios começou de dizer estas palavras – buena ventura, boena ventura, muytas rrobis, muytas esmeraldas, muytas graças devés de dar a Deus por vos trazer a terra honde ha tanta rriquesa."*[219]

but admits he was sent to spy and deceive. Subsequently, he saves Vasco da Gama from the King of Calicut's planned assassination, is accused of treachery by the King and completes his defection by requesting a passage to Lisbon. With regard to Gaspar da Gama, his origins are unclear, not least because he was a great story-teller. Velho states that he began by telling them he was a Christian who had been forced to convert to Islam, but remained a Christian at heart. Only when flogged did he confess to being a spy for the Sabayo (or naval commander) of Goa, whilst it did not emerge until later that he was a Jew rather than a Moslem and the way that Castanheda expresses this information suggests that it is still open to debate: *"& despois se disse que este gaspar da Gama era judeu por se achar que fora casado com hua judia que moraua em Cochim."*[220]

Silva, Chandra R. de (ed.) *Portuguese Encounters with Sri Lanka and the Maldives* Ashgate 2009, pp.57-8: "They become Christians out of fear when they have killed someone, or have robbed a person of his property, or have committed some similar offences that fall under my royal authority."

219 Köpke, D. and Paiva, A., op. cit. p.51. Our translation: One of those Moslems came with him, who had been on board our ships so many times that he started to say these words – buena ventura, boena ventura, many rubies, many emeralds, you should praise the Lord for having brought you to such a rich land:"

220 Castanheda, vol. I, p.89. Our trabslation: "And then it was said that this Gaspar da Gama was a Jew, for it was discovered that he was married to a Jewish woman who lived in Cochin."

Given the difficulty in ascertaining the truth about him, the Portuguese sea-captain remained highly suspicious of him and kept him as a prisoner on the return voyage back to Lisbon, via the Azores, where Gaspar converted to Christianity, thus receiving the same surname as his godfather, *da Gama*. Ultimately, it transpires that Gaspar managed to ingratiate himself with the Portuguese by spinning them what can only be described as a few good yarns, both on board ship and when they reached Lisbon. Álvaro Velho identifies a man from Alexandria who had been in India for some thirty years and could speak our language who told the crew of the resources of each of the fifteen kingdoms of India, whose most astonishing statement, beyond the tales of abundant riches beyond their wildest dreams, was that he led them to believe that eleven of the fifteen Indian kings were Christian. This could even have been part of his plot to entice them ashore into an ambush, for Álvaro Velho states that he had at one point confessed to being a Moslem, although "on the inside" he wanted to be a Christian.

It is not unreasonable to assume that it was Gaspar da Gama, as the biographic details match and he told similar tales when in Lisbon. Such a mistake by someone who claimed to have lived in the Iberian peninsula can only be ascribed to wilful deception, he told them exactly want they wanted to hear with little regard for the truth; or a colossal breakdown in communication, with the sailors only hearing what they wanted to hear (and Gaspar's command of language was insufficient to convey his message, which seems unlikely). Given that contemporary letters, written by mariners who met the fleet upon its return to Lisbon and spoke to Gaspar corroborate the version given by Velho, the first hypothesis seems the most likely, to the extent that in Jean Aubin's opinion, Gaspar was a fabricator and a self-seeker. [221]

Castanheda reports that he was taken back to Lisbon because of the information he could provide about India rather than because of his language skills. He had shown his usefulness by warning the Portuguese of an impending attack while anchored at Angediva and hence, Vasco da Gama wanted him to convey the wonders of India to the

221 cf. Aubin, Jean (Ed.) *Voyages de Vasco da Gama, Relations des Expéditions de 1497-99 & 1502-03*, Editions Chandeigne, Paris 1995, pp. 34 & 178

Court. In fact, whilst the crew could understand his Venetian, he could not speak Portuguese when he first came on board but learned it during the return voyage and thus it was only when he went back to India with Pedro Alvares Cabral that he really started to work as a *lingoa*. In Lisbon, he was presented, perhaps triumphantly, to King Manuel, who was also delighted with what he had to tell him about India:

> *"Dom Vasco todos recolheo, e trazia bem tratados, e mormente o judeu que lhe poz nome Gaspar da Gama, porque elle o tomou por afilhado no bautismo. Com o qual El-Rey muytas vezes falaua e folgaua de lhe ouvir cousas que lhe contaua,"*[222]

Yet, this initial encounter leaves a number of question marks hanging over his character: for instance, he hid his true background from the Portuguese and misled them about India, deceptions which sooner or later would surely be discovered and jeopardise trust in him. Two other prominent *lingoas* are mentioned by various chroniclers and attributed Jewish origin: Francisco de Albuquerque, who converted to Christianity upon his arrival in India and Alexandre d'Atayde, who is regularly referred to by his previous name, as he did not convert until much later. He is called Hucefe, Iosef and Çufo, which incidentally was the Moslem name given to João Machado. One can only speculate as to whether he might have hidden a forced apostasy to Islam whilst travelling on the Meccan trading vessel from which he was captured by Simão Martins.

Notwithstanding, his virtues are extolled by Gaspar Correia at every reference, as being a man of truth; wise and of course, a polyglot. Afonso de Albuquerque made him his personal interpreter, which meant that he was involved in the many secret negotiations, such as those with the King of Hormuz who was receptive to the Portuguese, unlike his overlord, Shah Isma'il. Both he and the King's *lingoa*, Acem Ale, were privy to private conversations:

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222 Gaspar Correia, op. cit. Vol. I, p.142. Our translation. "Dom Vasco took them all and treated them well on board, especially the Jew who he gave the name Gaspar da Gama to, because he took him as his godson when he was christened. The King often spoke with him and was delighted to hear his tales."

> *"E chegado Raix noradim, ho governador se levantou & mandoulhe dar hua cadeira em que se assentou. E despois de lhe dar as encomendas del rey Dormuz, disselhe que tinha que falar coele alguas cousas de segredo: & logo ho governador mandou despejar a popa da galé. & não ficarão mais que dom Garcia & hu sobrinho de Raix noradim & Acem ale, & Alexandre dataide lingoa & ho secretario."*[223]

and Atayde was entrusted with secret messages by both sides[224]. He even entered into Albuquerque's machinations to extort the bounty of a Moslem merchant.[225] He, like another linguist, Nicolau Ferreira whom we shall discuss below, had the Governor's confidence, yet Albuquerque never forgot the uncomfortable power that his linguistic mediators wielded: when returning to Goa from Hormuz, severely weakened by the terminal illness which was soon to take his life, he exhorted Atayde not to omit anything from the news of India that Moorish merchants they encountered relayed to them:

> *"E sendo ele tanto avante como Calayate, pareceu hua não de mouros ao mar que vinha da India, & por saber novas da India, mandou, que a fizessem arribar aa capitania, & que lhe levassem o capitão & piloto dela, & deu juramento dos santos evangelhos a Alexandre datayde lingoa, que nenhuma cousa lheencobrisse das novas que os mouros dessem da India."* [226]

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223 Castanheda, op. cit. Vol. III, p.336. Our translation: "And when Raix Noradim came, the Governor stood him and ordered he be given a seat. And after having given him the presents from the King of Hormuz, he said that he had some things to talk about in private: & the Governor immediately told everyone to clear the galley stern. And only dom Garcia and a nephew of Raix Noradim and Acem Ale, & Alexandre d'Ataide *lingoa* & the secretary."

224 cf. Castanheda, op. cit, Vol. III p.338

225 cf. Correia, Gaspar op. cit. Vol. II, pp. 388-90

226 Castanheda, op. cit. Vol. III, p.368. Our translation: "And when they got as far as Calayate, a Moorish ship coming from India appeared, and in order to have news from India, he order the Captain to draw alongside and to bring the captain and pilot to him & swearing on the Holy Gospels to Alexandre d'Atayde *lingoa*, that he hide none of the news the Moors brought from India."

Moreover, other participants viewed Atayde's and other *lingoas'* power in terms of being able to manipulate not only interpreter-mediated acts, but also the governor himself, as he bestowed more responsibilities on them; took their counsel and used them as his eyes and ears in the ports, in this context to spy on his own compatriots rather than the enemy. As a result, certain prominent *lingoas*, like Gaspar, Francisco de Albuquerque and Alexandre d'Athayde were the victims of jealousy on the part of others working in the *Estado da Índia*, who were quick to seize on their Jewish origins to criticise them.[227]

Many of those serving in the administration in India would address such complaints directly to the King in Lisbon, in particular to express their insatisfaction with their level of recompense and recognition. Several *lingoas*, including Francisco de Albquerque; Gaspar da Gama, and Duarte Barbosa, also wrote extensively to King Manuel, seeking reward. Their letters share common features, such as declarations of professional excellence; requests for improved status, and whistle-blowing on activities that were detrimental to the Crown's interests.

Francisco de Albuquerque was rather blunt in the tone of his request for payment in line with his magnificent skills: *"e, se me vosa altesa quer pera que seruua de lingoa, hum manyfyquo como eu, há me de fazer vosa alteza merces com que esqueça meu naturell."*[228]

For his part, in one of his letters to the King, Duarte Barbosa also claims that he is the best interpreter and should be paid more.[229] Meanwhile, Gaspar da Gama claims on more than one occasion that he is better than other interpreters, as in the following example in which he cites the opinion of Dom Lourenço de Almeida, the Viceroy's son:

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227 cf. Idem, vol. III, p.301

228 Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque, vol. III p.368. Letter from Francisco de Albuquerque to King Manuel, dated 20 October 1513. Our translation: "And if your Highness wishes me to serve as an interpreter, someone as magnificent as I, your highness will have to reward me to make me forget my origins."

229 cf. CAA Vol. III, pp 48-51

> *"Senhor em dezeseis dias de Novembro me chamou dom lourenço em sua camara, e me dise nesta maneira, saberes Gaspar como fuy a ceilão e tyve a mygel comigo por lymguoa, por amor que naquele tempo que estava pera partir pera ceilaom nam achei outra limgoa, por amor que voso filho era partido pera malaca em serviço delrei noso senhor, e vos mandou vos (sic) meu pai no porto de batecala a outros negocios, e asy chegei ao porto de ceylão e bem podera trazer dez mill cruzados de pareas a elrey noso senhor, e por mingoa de tall homem como vos que sabes todalas cousas nom trouxe nada."*[230]

Many Portuguese in India also used this correspondence to convey their grievances with the Governors or Viceroys and other officials of India. Barbosa complains about the behaviour of his colleagues towards the locals (which explains Albuquerque's criticism of him that he took their side rather than the *Estado da Índia*'s and criticises Captain Diogo Correa for wasting money (notably for paying men to get married locally when they this will lead them to convert to Islam). Gaspar da Gama denounces the syphoning off of gold; silver, and coral and slyly criticises Almeida for his magnaminity in that he forgives the wrongdoers because they are nobles or long-standing friends of his.[231] He also claims that his loyalty to the King has led to death threats and his being loathed by other serving in India: *"e sabera Vossa alteza que eu fiquei mall com muitos por servir vossa Alteza bem."*[232]

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230 CAA Vol. II p. 371. Carta de Gaspar da Índia a el-Rei Dom Manuel, 16 November, 1506. Our translation: Sir, on the sixteenth day of November, Dom Lourenço called me into his chamber, and told me thus, Gaspar, you know I went to Ceylon and took Miguel as my *lymguoa*, for the love of God, at the time when I was leaving for Ceylon, I could not find another interpreter, for the love of God your son had left for Malacca on the King Our Lord's service, and my father had sent you to Bhatkal on other business, and thus I arrived in the port of Ceylon and could have brought ten thousand cruzados of tax for Our Lord and King, but for want of a man like you who knows everything, I brought nothing."

231 cf. CAA Vol. II, p. 371 onwards.

232 Idem, vol. III p. 197. "And Your Highness knows that I was in a bad position with many for having served Your Highness well."

Yet he gives himself away in his letters. It is unsurprising that he should be unpopular when he claims that he is more loyal to the Crown than the Viceroy himself or describes how one of his tasks is to spy on the Portuguese merchants who are engaged in private business deals instead of operating for the Crown. For his part, Francisco de Albuquerque bitterly complained in a letter to the King that despite his invaluable services to the Crown, he had been chained and imprisoned when his master, Afonso de Albuquerque, doubted his loyalty and that he had not honoured his promises to free him. He too denounces failings in his own character: in addition to extreme conceitedness concerning his linguistic skills, he reveals that he is all too ready to use his value to the enemy as a bargaining chip. Albeit in extreme circumstances, as he floundered in the water following the aborted attempt to conquer Aden and flight to their landing craft, he wrote to the King that he had threatened to go and work for the Moslems unless the sailors picked him up.[233]

The most prolific writer seems to have been Gaspar, who tried to cultivate a rapport with the King, benefitting from the fact that he was the only one of these three to have been presented to him. His main motive was to prove that he had enough loyal service to warrant dispensation from the Crown; a pension for his wife and to secure employment as an interpreter for his son, Baltasar.

These letters are important documents for recording the history of linguistic mediation for they are tantamount to memoirs. They cannot, however, be considered objective accounts or opinions, for they were all written with specific goals in mind. All too often, historians of this period have accepted *lingoas'* statements at face value, without questioning their veracity, but we are compelled to observe in these three examples that the criticisms levelled at their authors are actually corroborated by their own words and that their employers' misgivings can be justified.

When considering the issue of trust and loyalty, we cannot ignore the view of the other parties in contact with the Portuguese. The vast majority of sources used for compiling this study are hardly neutral in that they written by Portuguese and often for

233 cf.CAA III, p. 366

the purpose of celebrating the achievements of the Discoveries, containing few insights into the views and opinions of others as they do not serve the authors' purposes. When discussing the use of captured natives as guides and informants on the voyages along the coasts of Africa, we saw exactly how difficult it was for these figures to straddle two cultures and languages. Despite the Portuguese efforts in India to ensure interpreter loyalty through conversion to Christianity of the locals in their employ, some interpreters were primarily employed by local rulers, such as Cidi Alle (and his namesake), who was mentioned above. We know that officially he worked for Malik Ayaz, governor of Diu[234] and that he received gifts from the Portuguese, despite Albuquerque's mistrust of him. Furthermore, he was often sent by Malik Ayaz with spurious messages just so that he could spy, but also shared confidences with Albuquerque concerning the advice that he would give to his master: *" e na pratica que com elle tivemos, diogo fernamdez e eu, sobre a fortaleza em dio e sobre miliquiás, a mim me parece que miliquyás tornará a mudar o comselho,... "*[235]

He was even used by the Governor's internal opponents, when they tried to convince him to advise the King of Cambay not to negotiate peace, but he relayed this conspiracy to Albuquerque himself. It appears highly likely that he was an example of an interpreter double-agent, as mentioned by Velinkar but never identified by name,[236] and would have been as suspicious to Malik Ayaz as he was to the Portuguese governor.

We must try also consider how Asian rulers considered the Moslem-born linguistic mediators who converted to Christianity. One of the few references we have concerns Nicolau de Ferreira, who was from Hormuz and was a confidant of the King of Hormuz, who sent him as ambassador to the King of Portugal, who he supplied with a lot of information about Turkey, India and Hormuz. The Portuguese king asked him to convert, which was when he took the name, Nicolau de Ferreira. He travelled out to Goa

234 cf. Aubin, Jean *Albuquerque et les négociations de Cambaye* in Mare Luso-Indicum, vol. I, Centre d'Études Islamiques et Orientales d'Histoire Comparée, 1971

235 cf. CAA vol I, p.333, dated 15.10.1514. Our translation: "And from the conversation that Diogo Fernandes and I had with him, about the fortress in Diu and about Malik Ayaz, it seems to me that Malik Ayaz will change his opinion again;...."

236 cf. Velinkar, Joseph, *India and the West: The First Encounters*, Heras Institute, Mumbai 1998.

in 1514 in Cristóvão de Brito's fleet, subsequently taking up duties as messenger between the two sides once again in Hormuz. He gained Afonso de Albuquerque's confidence:

> *"Era o Gouernador grande amigo com Nicolao de Ferreira, que o achaua muy verdadeiro em todas as cousas polo que o mais do tempo de noite com elle estaua praticando nas cousas do Reyno, que miudamente lhe elle contaua, porque sempre andou na côrte, e muyto na priuança d'ElRey."*[237]

but the closer he got to the Portuguese governor, the less agreeable he became to the authorities in Hormuz, who asked for him to be removed from the post of *lingoa* there:

> *"& mandoulhe pedir que lhe não deixasse por lingoa Nicolau ferreyra por quanto era homem revoltoso, & que lhe poderia ordenar algua cousa por onde el rey de Portugal perdesse ho credito dele."*[238]

João de Santiago appears to have followed the opposite trajectory: intially he worked for the Portuguese, having accompanied Governor Nuno da Cunha's visit to Diu to negotiate with Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat in 1533. Santiago was quickly allowed the run of the Sultan's palace and gained his full confidence, to the extent that the Sultan requested that he be allowed to stay, instead of returning with the Portuguese.[239] Gaspar Correia claims that he was captured in Socotra when young and forced to convert to Islam, before being taken prisoner by Afonso de Albuquerque. He

237 Correia, Gaspar, op. cit. Vol. II, p.452. Our translation: "The Governor was a great friend of Nicolau de Ferreia, who he considered to be very true in all affairs, so he spent most of the nights talking to him about the Kingdom's affairs, which he told the governor of in great detail, because he had always been at court and in the King's inner circle:"

238 CAA, Vol. III p.367. Our translation: "and ordered him to ask for Nicolau Ferreira not be left there as a *lingoa* as he was a troublesome man, & could do something which would ruin the King of Portugal's reputation."

239 Correia, Gaspar, op. cit. vol.III p.549

infers, through the words he puts in Santiago's mouth, that he converted (back) to Christianity, but during this particular episode the Portuguese doubt his loyalty, with the Governor giving clear instructions to avoid using him as a messenger-interpreter. Santiago helped the Sultan with his delaying tactics to thwart Nuno da Cunha's attempts to speak to him directly and pressure him to yield ownership of Diu: *"e o Santiago lhe andaua em delongas com mentiras, assy como lho mandaua ElRey."*[240]

Yet, the twist in his tale was still to come, for Santiago himself later claimed that the Sultan saw him more as a Moslem than as a Christian and thus used that position to actually betray the ruler, as he advised the Portuguese on the best course of action to take, before finally trying to warn the Sultan to flee from the advancing Portuguese fleet in the attack in 1537 which led to his death. Therefore, we are unsure of his true religion and allegiance, with perhaps the only possible conclusion being that they shifted concommitantly and that the Portuguese were more astute in their precaution than Sultan Bahadur Shah in his trust.

Zinadim, a sixteenth century Moslem historian, gives us the opposite view of a Portuguese renegade, who denounced a plot to the Samorin of Calicut, thereby enabling him to escape it and being punished by the Portuguese for his pains:

> *"Posteriormente, estando já os malditos franges solidamente estabelecidos e senhores de Calecut, procuraram atrair o Samorim a uma casa que jaz junto da fortaleza, com o pretexto de lhe entregarem um magnífico presente oferecido pelo rei de Portugal. A sua intenção era prendê-lo, mas ele, sabedor disso por informação de um frange, retirou-se, pretextando uma necessidade corporal.... e quanto ao frange denunciador, foi por esta razão remetido para Cananor com todos os que foram presos na mesma ocasião."*[241]

240 Ibid, op. cit. vol. III p. 548

241 Zinadím *História dos Portugueses em Malabar* (trans. David Lopes) Edições Antígona, Lisboa 1998, pp.67-8. Our translation: "Later, when the cursed foreigners were well established and masters of Calicut, they tried to entice the Samorin to a house next to the fortress, on the pretext of giving him

He also provides with an opposing view of a specific interpreter, Diogo Pereira, praised by João de Barros as a capable, prudent and experienced man with authority towards local kings and princes, but cunning and deceitful in the eyes of Zinadim:

> *"Foi da seguinte maneira que se fez a paz. Um principal dos franges saiu de Cochimpor por terra, pretextando com manha e astúcia que queria solicitar a paz do samorim. Era homem muito astucioso, fino e perspicaz, relacionado com alguns dos principais mercadores muçulmanos..."*[242]

Conversely, we can detect from this letter of complaint that the trusted Portuguese interpreter (originally seconded by the Viceroy) of the King of Kotte was the subject of a plot by his compatriots to have him removed from office, in order to silence him:

> "*The Viceroy, whom God now has, gave me a certain António da Fonseca as my secretary, and he serves me to my full satisfaction. But your factors do not want him to write for me, though I am greatly in need of him. They try to find some excuse to ship him outside the island, for they think that when I have no one to write for me, I will not be able to make my complaints about the wrongs which they are doing to me."*[243]

As we mentioned above, a linguistic mediator was not expected to exercise

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a magnificent present offered by the King of Portugal. Their intention was to capture him, but he, knowing of this, through information from a foreigner, withdrew, with the excuse of a bodily need...and as for the foreigner who denounced the plot, he was sent to Cannanore with all the others who were taken prisoner at the same time."

242 Ibid, p.76. Our translation: "Peace was reached in the following way. A leading foreigner left Cochimpor by land, cunnigly and shrewdly alleging that he wished to sue for peace with the Samorin. He was a very cunning, shrewd and intelligent man, who knew some of the leading Moslem merchants."

243 Original Portuguese document: Corpo Cronológico 2-241-93, translation in Silva, Chandra R. de (ed.) *Portuguese Encounters with Sri Lanka and the Maldives* Ashgate 2009, p.70.

neutrality, but to favour their paymasters, be they those who employed him or those who offered him gifts. It is unsurprising, therefore, that they should be praised by one party and disdained by the other, especially as they frequently acted as messengers, relaying negotiating positions from both sides and that their work as communicators was inextricably linked to spying. Thus, for the most part, neither the Portuguese nor local rulers could avoid having to deal with dubious mediators not drawn from the ranks of the trusted. This situation could be circumvented by each side employing their won interpreter, who would work for only one party in the dialogue. The interlocutors would utter their message at a pitch audible only to the interpreter alongside them, who would then relay it in the target language to the other party, a common arrangement even today in diplomatic encounters. Thus, when Captain Lopo Soares met the King of Cannanore in late 1504, with whom the Portuguese actually had quite cordial relations, since he was amenable to trading with them, two interpreters were present:

> *"Chegando um ao outro abraçaram-se, e, assentados, estiveram departindo, ambos com sua língua, por espaço de três horas, perguntando-lhe por muitas coisas assim da Índia como de Portugal, e se despediram muito amigos e contentes um do outro."*[244]

Decades later, another possibility was to use men of the cloth, primarily Jesuits, as mediators, in order to establish a basis of mutual trust. These priests were especially useful in this role, for they were men of learning who devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the study of Asian languages. They stood out from the vast majority who acted as interpreters, through their academic approach to their studies, striving to master the grammatical rules and achieve the appropriate level of erudition to be able to preach and converse at the very highest levels of society. Furthermore, it was in the interest of their mission to facilitate peaceful and cordial relations between the

244 Albuquerque, Luís de (ed.) *Crónica do Descobrimento e primeiras conquistas da Índia pelos Portugueses*, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda 1986, p.233. Our translation: "When they reached each other they embraced, and once seated, they talked, each with his own *lingua*, for three hours, asking each other many things about India and Portugal, and they bid each other farewell as firm friends, each content with the other."

Portuguese and local rulers. Nowhere was this more patent than in the delicate symbiosis of Portuguese traders and Jesuit priests in Japan. The latter provided the essential platform for communication with the merchants in Nagasaki, obtaining tolerance from the warlords towards their evangelising activities and even their close friendship in return, a matter which will be explored below.

3.3 ISSUES OF STATUS AND HIERARCHY

Over the previous two sections, we have come to observe something of a paradox between the way in which interpreters were treated and the power they held in view of their knowledge of local culture and the confidential and sensitive nature of their missions. Many of them considered themselves to be mistreated by the Portuguese and this undermined their loyalty. We have already observed how Francisco de Albuquerque threatened to switch camps and complained bitterly to King Manuel. Gaspar da Gama seemingly had to work relentlessly for his masters as a reward for the trust they placed in him, whilst João Garcês, who served as a *lingua* in India for over twenty years, was deeply unhappy with the low salary in comparison to an interpreter's responsibilities and what people could earn in trade and wrote a complaint in a letter to the King: "*Olhay, Senhor, que huum limgoa de Vosa Alteza nam tem que comer."*[245] Such complaints were motivated by the low regard in which interpreters were generally held by the Portuguese, in view of their religious and social background; innate suspicion of their knowledge, and also the greater importance attached to military service and indeed commerce.

Interpreters' inferior status is also subtly reflected in chroniclers' accounts: Gaspar Correia describes the Embassy appointed by Governor Diogo Lopes de Siqueira to seek Prester John, to be led by Dom Rodrigo de Lima. All the members of the embassy are referred to individually by name, including the Portuguese servants attached to

245 Silva Rego, António da *Documentação para a História das Missões do Padroado Português do Oriente* Agência Geral das Colónias, 1950 Vol II, pp175-9. Our translation: "Look, Sir, that Your Highness' interpreter does not have enough to eat."

Matheus, the Ethiopian ambassador, as well as all the presents and instruments to be taken. Yet, it is only at the end of these detailed arrangements and long after all the others that João Gonçalves is mentioned as the *lingoa "que sabia a lingoa arabia e abexim",* suggesting that he was the least important participant in Correia's view.[246] Furthermore, we must not overlook the fact that Correia worked in the Portuguese administration in India for approximately thirty five years, even as Afonso de Albuquerque's secretary and would thus have had experience of working with interpreters.

Notwithstanding, among the various interpreters and guides who accompanied this expedition, Gonçalves was undoubtedly the one who enjoyed the greatest consideration from the rest of the group. Father Alvares' first-hand account subtly established a hierarchy among them. João Gonçalves is always referred to by both his forename and surname, like any other member of the main group sent from Portugal. He is helped in his task by Jorge, an Abyssinian, who had been enslaved by Moslems in Hormuz and who had subsequently been taken on board a Portuguese vessel. He is clearly helpful to the Portuguese thanks to his knowledge of an Ethiopian language, is referred to by his forename and it is also clear that he is a Christian. The Portuguese have some esteem for him, for he is presented to the Negus as an example of the many linguists that Portugal can count on. Yet, throughout the text, Father Alvares refers to *linguas*, without mentioning their names, presumably because some of them were very casually employed, accompanying his group for just part of their journey and facilitating communication with local people. He may never have learned their names, but considering that he mentions in two of his chapter headings that he has either been left on his own with a *lingua* or that he has been sent to meet someone with a *lingua*, one can presume that these mediators were attached to the group for a longer period of time, yet like so many locals, do not warrant the recording of their names. This scale could also have been established rather unconsciously by Father Alvares, on the basis of the ease with which he personally could interact with the interpreters, for socio-cultural and religious reasons and in view of their knowledge of Portuguese: João Gonçalves being the most fluent as opposed to those who had joined the group en route and who are not

246 cf. Correia, Gaspar op. cit. Vol. II p.587

referred to by name at all, having a more rudimentary grasp of the priest's language.

A similar hierarchy can be deduced from accounts of Vasco da Gama's voyages, in that some interpreters who were Portuguese and part of the voyage from the outset are referred to by name, such as Martim Afonso, Fernão Martins and the scribe who knew Arabic, Diogo Dias and their unquestionable allegiance underscored, whilst others remain anonymous.

Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the fact that during the period under study, the status of linguistic mediators evolved enormously, as the Portuguese presence became more established. In the pioneering expeditions, contact with other peoples was sporadic and unpredictable. More consistent and lasting interaction only became feasible with the construction of the first strongholds or trading posts. Thus, as the *Estado da Índia* began to take shape, interpreting ceased to be considered solely as a function, but started to be recognised as an occupation, through the appointment of state interpreters, *lingoas do Estado.* Hierarchies continued with some linguists enjoying the privileged position of being directly attached to the leading figures of the Administration: Alexandre d'Athayde, for example, was Afonso de Albuquerque's personal *lingoa* and through the descriptions provided by Gaspar Correia and Bras de Albuquerque appears to have been assigned a superior role, in the talks with the King of Hormuz, whereby others such as Nicolau Ferreira actually performed the interpreting, whilst he supervised or acted as advisor to the Portuguese governor.

João Machado's loyal services were recognised and rewarded with various promotions and posts. He was listed by Gaspar Correia among the most notable participants in the assault on the fort of Benasteri[247] and quickly became a trusted advisor. He attended a meeting of advisors with Afonso de Albuquerque, at which he had expressed a different opinion to the officers present and then spoken privately to the captain: *"falou um pedaço à poridade com o capitão"*[248] to dissaude him from forcing entry to the fort when Rusal Khan was preparing to sue for peace. He was subsequently

247 cf. Gaspar Correia, op. cit. vol. II, p.303

248 CAA, vol. II, p.17

made the captain of Goan foot soldiers and chief justice.

Yet, we cannot fail to notice the difference in treatment of interpreters by the Portuguese and some of their Asian contemporaries. Owing to a lack of accessible sources, we cannot reliably determine the status and importance that Indian rulers attached to their linguistic mediators, other than to deduce that their were given a similar range of missions to those undertaken by the *lingoas* in the service of the Portuguese. We are, however, aware of the fact that interpreters rose to very high status in Japan and Siam, in particular, where they were able to hold significant sway over relations between the Portuguese, other Western powers and the authorities in the countries where they were stationed. We have already referred to João Rodrigues at length above, but we have yet to analyse the unique position he held in detail. He was Portuguese, but did not work for the *Estado da India* as he was a Brother in the Society of Jesus. He was clearly vital to the Portuguese for all their commercial business in Japan and to the Jesuits for their negotiations with the imperial authorities. At the same time, he was completely trusted by the Japanese rulers Hideyoshi and his successor, Ieyasu, who would hold private conversations with him; allow the Jesuits to continue their activities despite anti-Christian edicts, largely thanks to his persuasiveness, and instruct him to act as commercial intermediary on their behalf. He was even present at Hideyoshi's death-bed.[249]

Before him, two other Jesuits, Father Luis Fróis and his Japanese interpreter, Brother Lourenço, had also enjoyed a most cordial relationship with the Japanese ruler, Oda Nabunaga, and one of his most trusted feudal lords, Koremasa, with Fróis in turn having later gone on to interpret for the head of the mission, Father Francisco Cabral, at his meeting with Hideyoshi.[250] This relationship, though, had really been built before he started interpreting, whereas Rodrigues' status stemmed from his very work as an interpreter. We are left in no doubt as to his loyalty to the country of his birth, Portugal, not only from the fact that the Portuguese enjoyed a trade monopoly with Japan during the years he was stationed there, but also from the account left by the man who was to

249 cf. Boxer, C.R., *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1650,* Carcanet 1993 p.180

250 cf. Boxer, C.R., op. cit. p.140

succeed him as chief European interpreter to the Imperial ruler, Will Adams, who on arriving in Japan declared *"our mortal enemies being our truchmen"*[251], after a Portuguese Jesuit, presumably Rodrigues, had been sent for to act as interpreter.

Hideyoshi had varied a great deal in his attitude towards the Jesuits, but it is clear that he valued them more for their linguistic skills than anything else. He realised their importance for trade with the Portuguese who brought a ship laden with Chinese silks every year and then sold Japanese silver to China, and so did not enforce his expulsion edict of 1587 against them. Father Valentim de Carvalho believes that both sides preferred to do their business via the Jesuit interpreters, since they trusted them more than they trusted each other.[252] In fact, the Portuguese suspicions were confirmed in the build-up to the infamous incident surrounding the carrack *Nossa Senhora da* Graça and André Pessoa, when the Japanese interpreter working for Pessoa betrayed him by showing his list of complaints about the local *bugyo*, or samurai official, intended for Ieyasu's reading, to the *bugyo* himself, thereby making him Pessoa's sworn enemy.[253]

There came a point, however, when the Jesuits were no longer indispensable as intermediaries and hence there was no reason for Hideyoshi's successor, Ieyasu, to continue to tolerate their presence. They lost their privileged status as more Portuguese who had settled in the main trading port, Nagasaki, and married Japanese women became fluent in the language[254] and more Japanese learned Portuguese (ironically enough, thanks in no small measure to the efforts of the Jesuits themselves). Crucially, João Rodrigues had been replaced as trusted foreign advisor and interpreter by the Kentish man, Will Adams. The unique status of the interpreter in the shogunate did not change, since Adams went on to become equally if not even more trusted of Emperor Ieyasu, much to the annoyance of the Jesuits who lost that key position. Moreover, Portugal could no longer enjoy privileged trading relations, because the other trading companies, firstly the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (V.O.C.* - Dutch United East India Company) and subsequently the British, East India Company, no longer had to

251 Cf Boxer, C.R., op. cit. p.286

252 Cf Boxer, C.R., op. cit. pp. 243-44

253 Cf Boxer, C.R., op. cit. p. 276

254 Cf Boxer, C.R., op. cit. p.308

pass through Portuguese intermediaries and the Portuguese language to make contact with the Japanese. Obviously, Adams could provide them with interpretation between English, presumably Dutch, (he had arrived in Japan as the pilot of a Dutch vessel) and Japanese. [255]

The Portuguese interpreters maintained a monopoly in Siam for considerably longer. As mentioned above, the Portuguese were the first Europeans to reach Siam and quickly settled there: some worked as missionaries, whilst others were merchants who married local women. Their offspring rapidly became indispensable intermediaries in commercial relations between Siam and all European traders, a position they held for over two hundred years. Curiously, subsequent generations of mixed blood were Siamese subjects, some rising to high office within the administration. Portuguese was the language used with all Westerners and these Portuguese speakers were essential foreign affairs advisors to Siamese kings. Seabra in her analysis of Siqueira's Embassy to Siam in 1684 points to the fact that Friar Estêvão de Sousa, an Augustinian, had acted as Secretary of the Tribunal of His Excellency the Prakalang (or Foreign Minister) for the European nations. Using his fluency in Siamese, he also worked as the translator of correspondence between the King of Siam and the Portuguese Viceroy of India.[256]

Even though they continued to work in the Siamese Court until the early nineteenth century at least, the majority of Portuguese interpreters in South East Asia by this time could only eke out a miserable existence. The British Embassy Crawfurd took part in (in the 1820's) used the services of Portuguese linguists in Siam and on its other leg to Cochinchina (Antonio). He had been most helpful to them, but his livelihood was precarious:*"persons in his situation are miserably rewarded in Cochin China. He begged for a certificate of his skill and good conduct, which he might present to English merchants, frequenting the place; for on visits of strangers, his fortune depended."*[257] Crawfurd also details no shortage of beatings for the Christian interpreters in Siam and

255 cf. Puga, Rogério Miguel *A presença inglesa e as Relações Anglo-Portuguesas em Macau (1635-1793)*, Centro de História de Além-Mar, Universidade Nova de Lisboa 2009, p.28

256 Cf. Seabra, L., op. cit.

257 Crawfurd, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p.348

the fact that the Portuguese interpreters, including the *"Intendant of the Port"* mentioned above, are made to work as footmen at an official dinner. Another Embassy in which the same author participated five years to later to the Kingdom of Ava came across a Christian of Portuguese descent, Jeronimo da Cruz, who had just been appointed King's linguist, before being imprisoned by the Burmese government.

There are undoubtedly parallels to be drawn between the positions of Portuguese interpreters in Japan and Siam, but there are also a number of quite significant differences. In both countries, the Portuguese language became for a certain period of time the main vehicle of communication with all Europeans and Portuguese interpreters could become trusted confidants of the ruler. In the case of Japan, this role was played by a Jesuit priest who was perceived as neutral by the two sides but not by other European powers wishing to contact the Japanese; whereas in the case of Siam, it was played by various actors, as the position lasted for much longer, although we are aware that at different times it belonged to both an Augustinian friar and Siamese subjects with Portuguese ancestry. It is difficult to identify *lingoas* who enjoyed such a status within the *Estado da Índia*: Alexandre d'Athayde is referred to as being highly trusted by Afonso de Albuquerque in Gaspar Correia's account, but the Governor barely mentions him in his correspondence with the King of Portugal and did not award him a significant title or position. Gaspar da Gama, for all the gushing tributes of historians, was certainly not above being given the dangerous mission of brokering peace and had to implore Dom Manuel to let him retire because of his advancing age.

The significance of this discrepancy resides in what it tells us of the attitudes to inter-cultural communication during this period. In India, the Portuguese were at loggerheards with Moslem forces, who they wished to displace in order to gain control of the spice trade, and had to conquer a foothold militarily. During certainly the first half of the sixteenth century, there was little or no interest in cultural exchange on either side and communication was restricted to negotiations over territorial occupation and brokering for peace agreements. As the rulers of Japan and Siam were not Moslems, the Portuguese could attain their commercial objectives in these countries without having to persistently wage war, whilst linguistic mediators were equally an important source of cultural information.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTERPRETER-MEDIATED ACTS

4.1 A QUESTION OF LANGUAGE

For the act of transposing a message from one language to another, which is the basic act of interpreting, a strong grasp of both languages is obviously a pre-requisite. In many cases, those who perform the act of interpreting are naturally bi- or trilingual and bi- or tricultural, that is to say, they have been exposed to these languages and cultures from an early age and are considered as having a native level of fluency. Others work between their mother tongue or native language and another acquired language which they have mastered to near-native level, often by virtue of prolonged residence in a country where that language is spoken. Such interpreters can work into and out of both of these languages, termed "active languages" in today's jargon. During the development of the conference interpreting profession in the twentieth century, there were two main schools of thought on directionality, corresponding by and large to the two dominant ideologies: the Western schools of interpreting which believed that interpreters would achieve the best results when working into their strongest language or mother tongue because they would have the greatest resources at their disposal to render the message faithfully, and the Soviet school of interpreting, which believed that the best results could be achieved when working out of one's strongest language because the interpreter would be able to understand perfectly.

The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), established in 1953 and which has embraced members from around the globe has established clear definitions of interpreters' working languages, which underpin its philosophy on directionality, dividing them into A, B and C languages, on the basis of the Western school. The interpreter's A language is his mother tongue or language of which he is a

native speaker. This is the main language that he works into or speaks. The B language is a language in which he can express himself with near-native competence on all manner of subjects and is a language which he works into from his A language, that is to say, both A and B languages are active languages. C languages are languages that interpreters understand fully but only work out of.

Clearly, C languages are primarily only relevant for multilingual situations which did not occur in the Age of Discovery, although there are examples from that period of people who performed interpreting tasks and who were only able to understand the language they worked from rather than speak it as well. The directionality issue concerns the way in which interpretation of languages varies somewhat within today's international organisations: whilst generally English; French; Spanish and Russian interpreters will work only from their C languages into their A languages at the United Nations, the Chinese and Arabic interpreters will work into their A and B languages. So, when a Russian delegate speaks, an English[258] interpreter will interpret him into English, but when an Egyptian delegate speaks, an Arabic interpreter will interpret him into English (or French). The relevance for our study lies therein, in that there are few Western interpreters who master languages such as Arabic or Chinese and there is still a pattern of interpreters being bilingual rather than multilingual in these parts of the world.[259]

The classification of A, B and C languages is also extremely interesting when we compare it to practice in the sixteenth century. First of all, as Bellos[260] points out, languages were not as stable as they are today; few people had access to education or printed materials and thus standardised language, and there was much less awareness

258 English here obviously refers to a native English speaker, that is to say, who works in the English booth.

259 There are of course numerous Arabic and Chinese interpreters who master more than one foreign language, often English and French, but they will always tend to have one of them classified as a B language, a language that they will work into from their mother tongue. This is not the case for many European interpreters, working for the institutions of the European Union, for example, who will have an A language and two or more C languages.

260 Bellos, David *Is that a fish in your ear?* Penguin, London 2011.

then of the boundaries of language, that is to say, where one language ended and another began. Contemporary works reveal a certain liberality towards grammatical rules or uniformity, for there were a number of different spellings of the same word, sometimes within the same document but in particular across different authors. Even language practitioners' output, therefore, today's paladins of linguistic purity, would have suffered what we term, linguistic interference.

In the multilingual and educated community of the Jesuits, members of the Society would mix Italian, Spanish and Portuguese terms for instance.[261] Moreover, some of the people we are dealing with in this study had little formal education: sailors and travellers who were constantly crossing borders and meeting people from other countries, with whom they communicated as best they could, sometimes through an interpreter and at other times, using different languages, which they had some knowledge of; or a mixture of languages, and gestures. Very often, they would have been somewhat unaware of which language or dialect they were attempting to speak and would not have immediately identified the language of the other, but would have concentrated on trying to understand and make themselves understood. In many situations, interpreters would have done the same thing: Vasco da Gama's interpreter was described as "knowing many languages of blacks", but of course his knowledge would have been implicit and largely a passive knowledge, for he would have understood intuitively and used cognates to extend his understanding to related linguistic groups. That is to say, he had no formal knowledge or prior contact of the languages spoken in what is today's Republic of South Africa and Mozambique, but having sojourned in *Manicongo* recognised certain words. Thus, there is a certain unpredictability as to whether he will be useful as an interpreter or not (just as there was with the first African interpreters engaged to translate along the coast of Guinea), implied by the Álvaro Velho's account of the voyage:

> *"E o capitão-mor mandou sair em terra um Martim Afonso, que andou em Manicongo muito tempo, e outro homem com êle. […]*

261 The Jesuit visitor to Japan in the 1580's, Alessandro Valignano's Italian is somewhat contaminated by Portuguese, for example.

E êle disse que qualquer coisa que houvesse em sua terra, que nos fôsse necessária, que no-la daria de mui boa vontade; e isto entendia o dito Martim Afonso." [262]

Thus, this would perhaps be the equivalent of a C or passive language, but one in which his cultural knowledge and ability to communicate actively were very limited, thus he was essentially restricted to gathering information, instead of facilitating a two-way conversation. It becomes evident that many late fifteenth and sixteenth-century Europeans and Asians, especially those who travelled or were engaged in foreign trade, were polyglots, not in the sense that they were perfectly fluent in several languages, but rather that they could achieve some level of communication in a range of languages. Consequently, some of the contexts in the Discoveries in which linguistic mediation occurred were settings in which a mix of European languages encountered a mix of African or Asian languages, with both the input and the output being adapted to the respective speaker's and listener's ability to produce and understand language.

In contemporary documents, there are a number of authors who fail to draw a distinction between Spanish and Portuguese, which given the great rivalry between the two powers seems rather curious. However, the proximity of the two languages, their underlying cultures and the mutual comprehension of the two linguistic groups meant that in the context of a rather hostile and alien environment, any conscience of difference was lost, whilst it went largely unnoticed by other linguistic groups. When Vasco da Gama arrived in Calicut, the *degredado* (deportee) whom he sent ashore was taken to a Moor from North Africa, when the locals were unable to communicate with him in Arabic. The said Moor, Bontaibo, could speak Spanish not Portuguese:

"E ao outro dia, isso mesmo, vieram êstes barcos aos nossos navios, e o Capitão-mor mandou um dos degredados a Calecute; e aquêles com que êle ia levaram-no aonde estavam dois mouros

262 Fontoura da Costa, op. cit. pp.16-7. Our translation: "And the Captain of the Fleet sent Martim Afonso, who had spent a long time in Manicongo ashore, and another man with him. *[…]* And he said that if they needed anything from his land, he would be happy to give it to them. And Martim Afonso understood this."

de Tunes, que sabiam falar castelhano e genovês."[263]

Yet, any hitches in communication that there might have been and presumably there were, were of little consequence: *"E quãdo assi ho ouvirão falar estauão todos pasmados, que não crião q ouuesse homem tão lõge de Portugal que entendesse a nossa lingoa: & dauão graças a nosso senhor chorãdo de prazer, & Vasco da gama ho abraçou"*[264]

Shortly thereafter, in Goa, the Portuguese discovered Gaspar, the Jew of Spanish, German or Polish origin according to which story one believes, who had found his way to India many years before, via Cairo. He was sent by the rich Moslem he worked for to spy on the Portuguese, and whereupon he was spotted by them, he greeted them, according to Gaspar Correia[265] in Castilian, whereas other chroniclers agree that he addressed them in an Italian dialect (either Genoese or Venetian) which he had learned from merchants. The Portuguese would also have come into contact with the latter and had thus become acquainted with the language.

Francisco de Albuquerque, another of the most renowned interpreters in Portuguese India, who became the godson of Afonso de Albuquerque, was a Jew of Spanish origin and this was the language that he used at first to communicate with the Portuguese. When he writes to King Manuel, he calls Portuguese Spanish: *"porque vee vosa alteza esta carta como vay em spanholl notada? Nom vem a conto como a notarya em arrabya e parseo e melao, ou fallar diante de hum rrey e senhor,"*[266] Whilst not the only author of the time to do this, it is more surprising when it comes from the pen of a linguist.

263 Ibid, p.39. Our translation: "The following day, these vessels came back to our ships and the Captain of the Fleet sent one of his deportees ashore to Calicut. The men who went with him took him to a place where there were two Moors from Tunisia who could speak Spanish and Genoese."

264 CAA I, p.40. Our translation: "And they were all amazed to hear him speak like this, and could not believe that someone so far from Portugal could understand our language: and then praised the Lord, crying with happiness and Vasco da Gama embraced him."

265 Correia, op. cit. Vol. I, p.126.

266 CAA III, p.374 Our translation: Because can you see, Your Highness, how this letter is written in Spanish? Not to mention how I could write it in Arabic and Persian and Malay, or speak before a king and lord."

Moreover, he uses some Spanish terms in his letter, such as "alabar" instead of "louvar" (to praise), which indicate that he was indeed unclear as to the boundaries of the two languages.

Thus, it is only logical that some interpreters, the best-known ones in fact, worked between two languages, neither of which was their mother tongue or equivalent and would have employed various strategies to circumvent any shortcomings in their knowledge. In the particular cases of Gaspar and Francisco de Albuquerque, they were in actual fact multilingual interpreters (working in two-language contexts), in the sense that, at different times, they helped the Portuguese communicate with a number of different language communities in India, as the latter points out in his rather self-aggrandizing letter to the King:

> *"E prometenos de fazer muita merce pelo seruirmos de booa vontade, e asy o pozemos nos por obra, porque quando fomos a goa sempre o seruimos de limguoas, asy na arabia como em persia, como em troquisoo e guzarate, e se outras limguoas fora necessario a tambem o souberamos.*
>
> *Item: Todallas cartas que lhe vinham delrey de narsinga, como delrey de cambaya, e de badecala, e de chaull, e guzarate, e urmuz, todas pasavam por nosas mãos, e lhas liamos, e sempre amtre nos foy achada muita verdade e lealldade."*[267]

Francisco was a man of considerable talent, who appears to have a gift for picking up languages and understanding the gist of a conversation, yet at the same time, he is not someone who we can take at face value nor should we overestimate his knowledge

267 CAA, vol. III, p.44. Our translation: "And he promised to reward us well for willing service, and we set to work, because when we went to Goa, we always served as *limguoas*, as in both Arabia and Persia, *Troquisoo** and Gujarati (Hindi), and if other languages were needed, we knew them as well. Item: all the letters that came from the King of Vijayanagar, and the Kings of Cambay, Bhatkal; Chaul, Gujarat, and Hormuz went through our hands, and we read them and we were always found to be most true and loyal." ***** possibly, Turkish, from *Troquisco, turquesco.*

of other languages, for his actions and statements reveal that he was nothing if not opportunistic. He threatened to cross over to the Moslems, but, we should not be surprised that he considered switching allegiance, for he had previously been in service to a Moorish merchant and was captured by the Portuguese off Aden, swiftly throwing his lot in with them.

Returning to the question of language skills, we should certainly question his opinion of his abilities for he is undoubtedly a master of hyperbole: on the one hand, he claims to have been sent as an Ambassador by Afonso de Albuquerque, when really he was nothing more than his commercial agent and, on the other, he boasts of having learned Malay in a month, whilst the Portuguese held prisoner there for two years had failed to get to grips with the language:

> *"quando fomos a Malaca achamos hy Ruy araujo, e outros muitos cristãos que hy foram catiuos dous annos, os quaes eram tam nouos no trauto da terra, e na falla, que era cousa de se nam crer; e nam pasou hum mês que eu nam soubese o trauto da terra, e os pesos e limgoas."*[268]

He clearly acquaints inter-comprehension with sufficient knowledge to be able to translate and interpret and furthermore the above statement is inaccurate, for when Afonso de Albuquerque was heading back to Malacca, he came across one of the former prisoners who had escaped, João Viegas, in Pasai and immediately sends him with a message to the King:

> *"e foi-se a Pacé, que he o principal porto da Ilha Somátra, e como ali chegou, mandou visitar o Rey por João Viegas, e que lhe dissesse, que elle tinha sabido que naquella Cidade estava*

268 CAA vol. III, p.44. Our translation: "When we went to Malacca we found Ruy Araujo, and many other Christians who had been hedl prisoner for two years, who knew so little about local trade and could speak so little of the language, that it was hard to believe; and within a month, I knew the trade; the weights, and the language."

hum Mouro, que vinha fugido de Malaca....''[269]

in other words, Viegas had learned enough Malay in captivity to act as linguistic mediator. Flores also points out that another of the captives, Duarte Fernandes, had learned Malay and was thus an ideal choice for the first Portuguese Ambassador to Siam.[270] For his part, Francisco may well have made good progress in the language and been able to broker trade deals in it, but we must be more discerning than certain historians who have championed him as having completely mastered it in this very short space of time on the sole basis of his own boasting, which is for all the exaggerations mentioned hardly credible. In the above letter to the King, he claims that he could draft and translate correspondence in a number of other Indian languages if necessary, but they were not as similar to each other as he would have us believe, for the Jesuit supervisor, Alessandro Valignano, writing his summary of India in 1577, calls for at least four seminaries to be established "*di quattro lingue totalmente differenti, che non tengono tra di loro niuna sinbolizatione.''*[271] In his opinion, even if the people from Kochi understand a little of what the people from Coromandel say, it is not enough for a local clergyman to preach there, whilst the languages of Bassein and Goa are different to either of the former.

Francisco's vaunts indicate that sixteenth-century interpreters' level of linguistic knowledge was often approximate, it depended on the time spent in a particular country or with a particular linguistic group and the contexts in which an interpreter worked. Today's conference interpreter must be a generalist, in that he must have a broad knowledge of his working languages as the subject matters of his assignment will vary enormously, even within the majority of specialised organisations. In the Age of

269 Veríssimo Serrão, Joaquim (ed.) *Comentários de Afonso de Albuquerque* Imprensa Nacional, 1973, part IV, p.71. Our translation: "And he went to Pacé, whihc is the main harbour on the island of Sumatra, and when he arrived there, he sent João Viegas to see the King on his behalf, and to tell him, that he knew that there was a Moslem in the city who had escaped from Malacca."

270 cf. Flores, Maria da Conceição *Os Portugueses e o Sião no Século XVI,* Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, 2002, p.25.

271 DI, vol. XIII, p. 112. Our translation: "for four completely different languages which have no similarities."

Discoveries, however, the initial contacts between the Portuguese and local populations generally focused on a restricted number of fields, such as protestations of friendship and inquiries concerning trading opportunities. Interpreters could, therefore, fulfil their role with far fewer linguistic resources than are necessary today; they would not have needed the same rapid reflexes for transposal, as often communication was asynchronous and also, because there was not necessarily an aspiration, on either the part of the interpreter or his clients, to having native or near-native competence in either language. Since both parties were entirely reliant on interpretation and the very few who could provide it, the main concern for the majority of contexts was that it should be functional, enabling communication to occur, rather than elegant.

User expectations alluded to above were greatly influenced by the fact that interpretation was not necessarily provided in their native languages either, since the Portuguese could be listening to the rather stilted Spanish of Bontaibo or the generally comprehensible Venetian of Gaspar and local rulers to Arabic rather than Malayalam or their respective native languages. Moreover, as referred to above, many meetings were between different groups of languages: the Discoveries may have been Portuguese, but the "Discoverers" certainly included Spaniards and Italians of various dialects, consider Cadamosto; Pigafetta and Empoli, for example, who were unlikely to have spoken a pure form of Portuguese, and *mutatis mutandi* the Portuguese captain, Ferdinand Magellan, (real name Fernão de Magalhães), did of course lead a Spanish attempt at a circumnavigation with an eclectic crew from half a dozen European nations and an interpreter, Henrique, who judging from his biography, spoke more Portuguese then Spanish and whose native tongue, Malay, was itself a *língua franca* that enabled him to communicate with elites though not ordinary natives on stop-off points in the area of the Philippines.[272] Seafarers and merchants, in particular, those with limited education, were not particularly articulate themselves nor sensitive to language. Thus, they would have been unconcerned by their own and almost oblivious to their interpreters' linguistic improvisation. Invariably, interpreters and users of interpretation, therefore, only made

272 cf. Adams, Christine *Looking for interpreter zero (2): Enrique, Magellan's slave interpreter.* Acessed at http://aiic.net/page/6387/looking-for-interpreter-zero-2-enrique-magellan-s-slave-interpreter/lang/1 on 11 May 2014

distinctions between languages that they understood, however roughly, and those they did not: one recalls the accounts of Cadamosto and Duarte Barbosa, in which the objectives of making contact with the natives and obtaining information depended upon whether or not there was any possibility at all of verbal communication, regardless of how tenuous it might have been.

When the interpreter was from the other continent, users may have been more suspicious about his neutrality, but on the other hand, would have been more tolerant with his grasp of their language, especially when they couldn't master his, as illustrated by the reaction of Gama's fleet to Bontaibo (when it wasn't even Portuguese) and the religious orders' satisfaction with their irreplaceable native Japanese interpreters. Such attitudes should not come as a surprise, after all, even today, we are generally grateful for and more tolerant of grammatical faults in interpretation from the so-called exotic languages. Indeed, in many communication situations similar to those that the Discoveries entailed (situations of conflict; mercantile bargaining; gathering of local information), our prime concern is still effectiveness. Thus, we can deduce that in many circumstances, comprehension in interpreter-mediated acts was a precarious business indeed that required the goodwill of all participants, for there were significant conditioning factors on all sides: non-native speaker; users' approximate understanding of target language ("non-native listener"); interpreters operating into a language with which they had had little contact for many years or which they were far from mastering and out of a language which they understood more or less intuitively. Perhaps the most eloquent example of stilted yet accepted communication comes from Cadamosto, who obeyed the King's instruction to return to Lisbon with a native of the last land visited, should the interpreters on board not have been able to understand the locals, in order to question him through the many African "interpreters" (the term is of course used most liberally to simply refer to Africans with a knowledge of Portuguese) in Lisbon. The results in hindsight would appear disappointing, as the only information gathered was that a mythical one-eyed giant lived in the man's homeland:

> *"Por esta razão, retiveram este negro: o qual em suma conduziram a Portugal. A este negro o sobredito senhor rei de Portugal pô-lo a falar com vários negros; e finalmente de uma*

sua mulher negra, escrava de um Cidadão de Lisboa, e que também era de terras distantes foi entendido, não pela sua própria linguagem, mas por uma outra linguagem que ele e ela conheciam. E daquilo que referiu ao dito senhor Rei por meio desta mulher, só se entendeu que dizia que este havia dito que, entre outras cousas havia no seu país alicornios vivos e outras muitas coisas" [273]

The kind of interpreting skills required by missionaries could not have been more different. The power of words was all important for achieving their aim of converting the local populations and holding them firm in the Christian faith. Yet, they too faced specific linguistic challenges within their own ranks: whilst the majority of the clergy working in Portuguese India from the mid-sixteenth century were Portuguese Jesuits, there were also a significant number of missionaries from other countries, especially Spain and Italy. Since local interpreters had to be used, Francis Xavier quickly issued instructions whereby new recruits to India had to be able to speak Portuguese: "*Si de nosa Companñia vieren algunos estrangeros que não saben falar portugues, hé necesario que aprendan a falar, porque de outro jeto não haberá topaz que os entenda."*[274] This observation may have been the result of bitter experience, for Xavier was a Spaniard and suffered greatly with some of his interpreters, as we shall see below. Meanwhile, three decades on, Valignano somewhat maliciously suggested that Francisco Cabral's (the Azorean head of mission in Japan, who disagreed with Valignano on language policy) letters to Rome would have to be translated from

273 Cadamosto, op. cit. p.178. Our translation: "They took him to Portugal, where they presented him to his Majesty, who had him speak through several blacks and finally through a slave woman belonging to a Citizen of Lisbon, who also came from a very distant land; he made himself understood through her, not in his own language, but in another which both he and she knew. And it is difficult to understand what the said black man told the King through that woman, except that among other things, he declared that 'alicornios' live in his country." Alicornio – a mythical giant from Portuguese legends with one eye in the middle of its forehead.

274 Silva Rego, António da, *Documentação para a História das Missões do Padroado Português do Oriente* Agência Geral das Colónias, 1950, vol. III, p. 167. Letter from Francis Xavier in S. Tomé, 8.5.1545. Our translation: "If some foreigners, who do not know how to speak Portuguese, come from our Society, they will have to learn it otherwise no interpreter will understand them."

Portuguese into Spanish to be understood, suggesting that the Society's hierarchy in Europe comprised few Portuguese speakers, whilst it was the essential language in Asia.[275]

The other side of the equation of course was no easier. As the missionaries fanned out across Southern India and Ceylon, in particular, so they encountered a multitude of languages. Their aim was to have a priest who knew the local language in each location and to also have two interpreters *(topazes)* there[276.] Some of the languages were difficult to distinguish and even harder to find interpreters for. Catechism classes could be delivered to a multilingual audience coming from different areas of the country, thus involving several interpreters working at the same time, each from Portuguese into his own language.

> *"Isto tudo se lhes dis polo mais fácil modo que se pode, para que elles possão entender, falando-lhes por enterpetres de que há sempre muyta falta polas muytas e diverssas naçõis que aquy concorrem, porque de quasi toda a nação destas partes vem caticuminos; algumas vezes se acontesse que em huma mesma pratica se fala por tres e quatro enterpetres de diverssas linguoas a diverssos,"*[277]

In addition, the priests could be obliged to resort to extreme forms of relay interpreting, with several links in the chain, with one interpreter working from Portuguese into a local language and then other interpreters working from this language into another, as clearly they did not have interpreters who could work directly from

275 cf. DI XIV, p. 268

276 cf. DI, vol. XI, p.5. Instructions given by Alessandro Valignano, 1575.

277 DI, vol. IV, , p.168. Letter from Brother Emmanuel Teixeira to the Portuguese Company of Jesus, 25.12.1558. Our translation: "This is all said to them in the simplest possible form, so that they can understand it, speaking to them through interpreters, which we are always lacking because of the many and diverse peoples that seek us here, as catechumens come from almost all parts of this nation; in some sermons we end up speaking through three or four interpreters of different languages to different people,"

Portuguese into all the local tongues:*"e outras que a hum soo se fala por tres, quatro, que huns aos outros se vão enterpretando até chegar ao que se dirige a pratica."* [278]

Nevertheless, the Jesuits had an advantage in India, in that a community of mixed descent quickly developed, following the settlement of a considerable number of Portuguese there, providing a ready source of young boys with a grounding in two languages and cultures, the first inter-cultural generation of the Portuguese expansion in Asia, a phenomenon which was subsequently replicated, albeit under rather different circumstances, in Siam; Burma and Macao.

The position of Portuguese as the dominant European language in these parts made matters more difficult for their rivals in both the business of trade and evangelisation. As Malyn Newitt has pointed out,[279] English and Dutch vessels, among others, would take Portuguese interpreters on board, as indicated by François Valentijn in his description of Ceylon when arriving off the coast of Bhatkal in 1602**:** "some Cingalese came on board and brought an interpreter also who spoke Portuguese."[280] In fact, the Dutch failed in their attempt to spread their language and frequently settled for using Portuguese when and where they replaced them as the imperial power. The case of Ceylon, which the Portuguese left in 1658, is paradigmatic of the survival of their language as a medium of communication between two groups of non-native speakers. M.H. Goonatilleka writes: *"The impact (of the Portuguese) was so great that even the British Governor Frederick North as late as the early nineteenth century had to employ a Portuguese-Sinhala interpreter to accompany his ambassador to the court of the Kandyan king."*[281]

278 DI, vol. IV, , p.168. Letter from Brother Emmanuel Teixeira to the Portuguese Company of Jesus, 25.12.1558. Our translation: "And others in which to speak to one, we speak through three or four, who interpret from one to the other until they reach the one for whom the sermon is intended."

279 cf. Newitt, Malyn *The Origins of Portuguese Expansion 1400-1668*, Routledge, 2005 p.31

280 Arasaratnam, Sinnapah *François Valentijn's Description of Ceylon*, Hakluyt Society, 1978, p. 281.

281 Goonatilleka, M.H., *A Portuguese Creole in Sri Lanka*, in ed. De Souza, Teotónio R., *Indo-Portuguese History: Old Issues, New Questions*

During the seventeenth century in particular, French and Portuguese missionaries jostled for supremacy in Siam and other parts of Indochina. The Portuguese had a head-start of over a century of course and during this period the *Estado da Índia* had been sought out as an ally by the Siamese. The tradition of Portuguese adventurers and the Luso-Siamese community also having defended the Siamese against invaders had provided them with great prestige, alongside knowledge of the language and customs. The first missionaries were two Portuguese Dominicans who arrived in 1566 and immediately set about learning the Siamese language,[282] followed by Franciscans in 1582 and Jesuits, namely Baltasar de Siqueira, in 1607. Accordingly, by the time the French came on the scene in 1662, there were Luso-Siamese and indeed Luso-Burmese working as interpreters or who had become members of the clergy. Not only would there have been a certain reluctance to serve these new arrivals, but the French were forced to use the medium of Portuguese to preach, which thwarted their conversion efforts:

> *"Certainement il nous eut été difficile de nous en servir, ne nous expliquant que par interprète et par la langue portugaise que nous ne savions qu'à demi, il nous était impossible de mettre en usage les beaux discours que nous eussions pu emprunter de la théologie et sur lesquels nous étions préparés dès la France."*[283]

Eventually, the French clergy tried to ban the use of Portuguese, but the language survived albeit in a creolised form well into the nineteenth century and continued to be used as the main vehicle for communication with all Westerners. As the Portuguese state never established an administration in Siam, there are far fewer Portuguese sources on

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282 cf. Flores, Maria da Conceição *Os Portugueses e o Sião no Século XVI* Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, 2002.

283 *Relation du voyage de Monseigneur l'évêque de Beryte, 1666* apod Lopes, David, *Expansão da Língua Portuguesa no Oriente nos Séculos XVI, XVII e XVIII*, Portucalense Editora, 1936. Our translation: "It was certainly difficult for us to do so, as we can only explain ourselves through an interpreter and in Portuguese which we can only get by in, it was impossible for us to use the beautiful theological speeches we could have drawn on and which we had already trained with in France."

the subject than with regard to India or Macao, but we do know that adventurers and merchants began to settle close to the Siamese imperial capital of Ayutthaya in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, welcomed by the Siamese King who wished to call upon them for military service to fight the common Moslem enemy, when necessary. As the settlement was boosted by new arrivals from other Portuguese strongholds that fell to the Dutch, a bilingual or trilingual population developed, for they frequently spoke more than one Oriental language. They were employed at the Court, where they interpreted for official embassies from all Western powers, with some of those who rose to prominent position being members of religious orders: Friar Estêvão de Sousa, an Augustine acted as Secretary of the Tribunal of His Excellency, the Prakalang, for the European nations and translated correspondence between the King of Siam and the Viceroy of India[284]. They also worked as interpreters in the ports and customs-houses[285] and for the Dutch and English factories.

A community of some four hundred Thais of Portuguese origin worshipped in Thonburi, Bangkok in the late eighteenth century, where they had fled after Ayutthaya had been conquered by the Burmese army in 1767. They were re-discovered in the 1820's by a new wave of Western explorers and merchants, including some eighteen interpreters working at the port, who would receive a commission for each vessel they unloaded.[286] The most notable of the interpreters was the *Sura-Sakhom* or harbour-master.

Similarly, there was no official Portuguese administration in the area now incorporated into the nation of Burma, which in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries comprised several kingdoms including Arakan; Ava, and Pegu. Portuguese adventurers and merchants were also attracted here and formed mercenary forces in the continuous wars between the aforesaid realms, often finding themselves on opposing sides. Filipe de Brito was the most notorious of them: in return for his support, the King of Arracan

284 cf. Seabra, Leonor *A Embaixada ao Sião de Pero Vaz de Siqueira (1684-1686)* Universidade de Macau, 2003

285 cf. Castelo Branco, Miguel *A Época de Ouro dos Protukét do Sião* Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisboa 2011, p.19

286 cf. Castelo Branco, op. cit. p.22

made him governor of Syriam in 1599, and was later proclaimed King of Pegu. He fought many battles against local leaders to gain control of the fortress at Syriam, during which a number of Portuguese soldiers deserted. When he in turn was defeated in combat, the survivors of his garrison were enlisted to serve in the Burmese king's army. Thus, the Eurasian descendants of Portuguese settlers (who preserved their Catholicism and European customs) continued in Burma on either a voluntary or coercive basis, with some of them being obliged to enter the service of the Court(s) to work as interpreters. It was particularly important for the Burmese to have their own linguists, given that the *Estado da Índia* did not have any for their language.[287]

They took to using Portuguese as the main medium of communication with all Westerners, which was, as in Siam, an astonishingly enduring practice. As the British began to take an increasing interest in trade with Burma in the second half of the eighteenth century (some one hundred and fifty years after the demise of Filipe de Brito), so their successive deputations would be met by "black" Portuguese interpreters, of a certain official standing as noted earlier in this study, still working for the local rulers. It appears from Ensign Robert Lester's Proceedings on an Embassy to the King of Ava in 1757, that two interpreters worked in tandem to relay oral and written messages between the English and the Burmese King (of Ava), with the English to Portuguese interpreter being employed by the King's Portuguese to Burmese one (or perhaps an official interpreter of lower standing):

> *"This morning at 8 o'clock Antonio with William Pladwell, an English mustce* (sic) *in his Employ, and a Búraghmah Writer belonging to Antonio, came into my Boat, and translated Mr. Newton's letter to the King (of Ava) as likewise the Treaty of Alliance, into the Bûraghmah language, in the following manner. Pladwell interpreted the above to Antonio in the Portuguese language, and Antonio dictated to his Writer in the Búraghmah language; This, according to my instructions, is the best method I*

287 cf. Guedes, Ana Maria Marques, *Interpretes de Português na Birmânia*, Anais de História do Além-Mar, 2002., vol. III, Universidade Nova de Lisboa.

can find, to get the above done."[288]

It, therefore, transpires that the Western powers had little choice other than this rather cumbersome method. In addition, at this point, official contacts had to be made via the court-appointed linguists; Portuguese interpreters, however, did not hold a monopoly, as the Burmese had Armenians and others in their employ who could provide interpretation into Persian or Hindustani, which were languages of contact with the British, too, and which were more prevalent than Portuguese in the account left to us of his own Embassy in 1795 by Michael Symes. On that occasion, not only did he bring his own interpreter with him: a tobacco trader of Portuguese descent, Fauntchoo from Bassien, who the deputation recruited in the Andaman islands[289], but also made the specific demand to the King of Ava that henceforth British merchants be allowed to use whichever interpreters they chose, a demand that they were granted and which would have inevitably led to the extinction of the Portuguese ones, who were the possibly unintended victims of a strategy to neutralise Armenian and French conspirators, like the Court's interpreter Gregory, who had instigated the attack on the British at Negrais in 1759.[290]

As previously alluded, to, some of the Portuguese interpreters themselves employed by the Siamese and various Burmese courts were actually multilingual, with Symes (1795) referring to one who could also speak Hindustani and with whom he could thus communicate more easily, whilst Castelo Branco's work on relations between Portugal and Siam refers us to Crawfurd's Journals of Embassies, conducted in the 1820's which mention a "*King's linguist"* in Burma and a curious visitor in Bangkok: an official interpreter, Pascoal Ribeiro de Alvergarias, son of a Portuguese Christian from

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288 Dalrymple, Alexander *Oriental Repertory*, George Biggs, London, 1793, p.209. Accessed at: . http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc2.ark:/13960/t1tf0377r;view=1up;seq=1 See also p.211 for an example of relay interpreting being performed by the same pair. "Mustce" may be a typographical error for "mustee", an individual of mixed race, possibly from the Portuguese word with the same meaning, *mestiço.*

289 cf. Michael Symes, *An Account of an Embassy sent to the Kingdom of Ava*, W. Burlmer & co., 1800. Accessed at: www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/SBBR4.1-Symes.pdf

290 cf. Ibid, p.108

Kamboja:

> "*This gentleman holds a high Siamese title, and a post of considerable importance. Considering his means and situation, his acquirements were remarkable; for he not only spoke and wrote Siamese, Cambodian and Portuguese with facility, but also spoke and wrote Latin with considerable property. We found, indeed, a smattering of Latin very frequent among the Portuguese interpreters at Bangkok, but Señor Ribeiro was the only individual who made any pretense to speak it with accuracy."*[291]

What becomes clear from such accounts is that there were still a number of Portuguese interpreters in Rangoon and Bangkok in the 1820's, a number put at five out of a total of thirty two Portuguese citizens registered at the consulate in the latter city, in a report in the late 1870's.[292]

These appear to be among the last known of Portuguese linguists in this part of the world, but one cannot fail to express admiration at the survival of the language, as a language of diplomacy, when the communities of speakers were small in number and the official presence of the country of that language had been limited to occasional embassies for the preceding one hundred and fifty years. It is a fact, though, that Portuguese played a pivotal role in international relations, epitomised by two further episodes: the first in which *"The letters from the Governors of Madras and Bengal were translated into the Persian, Portuguese, and Birman languages and the different versions carefully collated"*[293] and the second in which the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Siam and the United States, dating from 1836, written in Siamese

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291 Crawfurd, John *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochinchina exhibiting a view of the actual state of those kingdoms.* London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830, vol. I p.275-6, apud. Castelo Branco, op. cit.

292 cf. Domingos, Susana Isabel Marcelino Guerra *Portugal e Tailândia. Do fim da extraterritorialidade à entrada de Portugal na CEE (1925-1986)* p.228.*U*npublished doctoral thesis. Accessed at: http://www.dart-europe.eu/full.php?id=806825 on 13 May 2014

293 Symes, *op. cit.*, p. 22

and English was accompanied by Portuguese and Chinese versions, as nobody could compare the two original languages. Presumably, Portuguese interpreters were instrumental in the drafting negotiations of this document, but ironically these episodes heralded their decline as other powers could thenceforward intensify their relations with South East Asia and impose their language.

We must, therefore, look for an explanation for the longevity of Portuguese interpreters in these countries, the seeds of which were sown by the Discoveries. Many of the issues discussed previously in this study combined to provide the necessary circumstances for the language to survive during such a long period. If we return to the origins of Portuguese settlements in Siam and Burma, we shall recall that the first immigrants were private entrepreneurs and even criminals, who were deliberately evading Portuguese state control. They quickly threw in their lot with their hosts by providing military support against invaders, thereby proving their loyalty, cemented in the case of interpreters by their incorporation into official positions as linguists in court service and being Crown subjects. As a distinct Christian minority, most of whom lived together in a "village", they maintained cultural and religious practices over many generations, not least because this identity provided them with social advantages. One can even envisage micro-strategies being employed to preserve the language, as transpires from the interview conducted by the British of one Jeronimo da Cruz, multilingual interpreter, imprisoned in the wake of the Anglo-Burmese war in the late 1820's by the Burmese government, who identifies himself as a *"King's* (of Ava) *linguist"* and states that he was *"educated at the Portuguese school in Rangoon."*[294] Additionally, even in the early nineteenth century, their descendants still enjoyed the prestige of high military office which reflected favourably of course on the Portuguese communities as a whole; the interpreters (whose duties could straddle the linguistic; administrative, and military spheres) and their language.[295]

In this brief analysis, one cannot overlook the fact that the Asian countries in

294 cf. Crawfurd, John *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava, 1827,* Colburn, London, 1827, Appendix, pp. 63-5.

295 Ibid. Jeronimo refers to *"John Christian, Portuguese, a chief of the King's artillery"* and also claims to have himself been the king's favourite before war broke out with the English.

question were less exposed than surrounding regions to Western expansion during the 16th and 17th centuries, thus the only way to penetrate their cultures and learn their challenging languages was to reside there for a long period, something which the Portuguese and their descendants were the first and, for a considerable time, the only Western Europeans to do. Moreover, the religious orders toiled in establishing an enduring and significant presence, as opposed to their successes in India and Japan. The only possible alternative to Portuguese adventurers and the like for rulers in Indochina was, therefore, to use interpreters provided by their interlocutors, which if available were undesirable, as they would have inevitably been deserters from their own countries, as Guedes points out.[296] Lastly, Portuguese may have survived out of pure stagnation or a rather illogical averseness to change: a Siamese prince wanted to read about Napoleon's feats, so bizarrely offered the Portuguese consul *"a handsome sum of money"*[297] to translate a history from French into Portuguese, "*for the purpose of being rendered into Siamese through the Christian interpreters."*

The Portuguese language also got a headstart over its European rivals in China, stemming from quite the opposite context: an early and strong presence of the State and religious orders. Once Macao had been settled in the late 1550's, inter-marriage soon created a generation of bilinguals, whilst at the same time, the Jesuits founded the Colégio de São Paulo in 1594, considered the first Western-style university in the Far East, for language training. Although, many of the most distinguished scholars were not of Portuguese origin, Mateus Ricci and Ferdinand Verbiest, for example, they produced important learning aids, which promoted the connection between Portuguese and Chinese (Ricci produced the first bilingual dictionary for Chinese and a European language, Portuguese). According to Paiva, their high reputation soon led to other nations requesting their services as interpreters in their embassies.[298] The Portuguese dominated trade during the seventeenth century and initially, for a short period, when English merchants arrived in the early eighteenth century seeking trading opportunities with China, they turned to their linguists for help. As the centre of trade switched to

296 cf. Guedes, *op. cit.,* p. 348.

297 cf. Crawfurd, *op. cit.,* vol. I, p.194

298 Paiva, op. cit. p.27

Canton, so Chinese Pidgin English developed, albeit with a number of borrowings from Portuguese, as well as Malay and Indian language terms brought to China by Portuguese merchants[299], in the development of their own simplified patois. Consequently, on the one hand, the English started hiring (Pidgin) English-Chinese interpreters to deal with the Imperial administration, and on the other hand, the English could avoid using local Portuguese interpreters, thereby undermining the position and the interests of the Portuguese, as they began to pursue a determined policy of sinology to further their commercial aims. The Portuguese language survived rather longer as a language of contact and interpreting with the Chinese Imperial Court, albeit alongside others, thanks to the presence of Jesuits who had passed through Macao, employed by the Emperor in technical positions, such as Astronomers and Physicists, but also deployed as interpreters for visiting delegations.

For the first decades of European presence in Japan, especially of the religious orders, Portuguese was without doubt the pivotal contact language, for as previously mentioned it enjoyed this privileged position by dint of the keen interest the Japanese had in the trade route plied by the Portuguese between Macao and Nagasaki and the Jesuits' in maintaining a key role as linguistic intermediaries in this trade. Thus, Japanese converts, some of whom were subsequently ordained were strongly encouraged to learn Portuguese and were even sent to the seminaries in Macao and India to do so. As in China, the first Jesuits to learn the language would help their fellow brethren, in particular, João Rodrigues, whose didactic publications we shall return to in the next chapter, who was one of a series of Jesuit interpreters whose favour with Japanese warlords, in particular, Hideyoshi and Ieyasu, contributed to them being rewarded with not only a commercial but also a linguistic monopoly. It was after his expulsion in 1610 from the country and replacement by Will Adams, the pilot of a Dutch *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (V.O.C.) ship, that the position of the Jesuits started to decline and with it that of the Portuguese language. Adams not only took over as commercial agent, but also learned Japanese quickly and well enough to take over as

299 cf. Williams, Lea L., The Portuguese Contribution to the Former Trade Language of the China Coast in *Vice-Almirante A. Teixeira da Mota in Memoriam,* vol. II, IICT/Academia da Marinha, 1989, pp.375-381.

the Emperor's interpreter, whilst Portuguese merchants settled in Nagasaki, took Japanese wives and acquired a working knowledge of the language and renegade *dojuku* learned Portuguese, rendering Jesuit mediation obsolete.[300]

This overview of how different languages were used in contacts between Europeans and Africans and Asians has enabled us to trace the expansion, and in some cases, regression of Portuguese. Initially, a medley of simplified expressions was employed as a means of establishing basic communication, before greater competence was acquired, enabling Portuguese to become the working language of multinational entities and a vehicular or *lingua franca* in West Africa *(Guiné)* and the Indian Ocean region. Yet, not in the sense that it could be managed by all, but rather that it was a pivotal language with enough speakers on both the European and Asian/African sides for it become the medium through which linguistic intermediaries could ensure comprehension among linguistically disparate groups. Such intermediaries included both native and non-native speakers of Portuguese, the latter of whom could find themselves interpreting between two languages, neither of which were their own. This unique contact role that the language played, having been learned intuitively by relatively large numbers of non-native speakers, conditioned its evolution into creolised forms, which themselves again became the languages of interpreters.

4.2 IN EXPLORATION AND CONQUEST

In an earlier section of this study, we referred to the observation that the broad fields of linguistic mediation during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance were in religious, military and exploration contexts. When examining how linguistic mediators intervened in these domains, it makes sense to consider them separately, even if the tasks may have in some cases been almost identical, because the purpose of their interaction between the two sides was quite different. We should begin by stating that the way in which a interpreter's function was understood in the Portuguese expansion was vastly different to our understanding of this activity today. We cannot fail to

300 cf. Boxer, Charles *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1650,* Carcanet 1993, p. 233.

underscore the fact that the profession of conference interpreting only developed on an international scale during the twentieth century with the first staff interpreters in multinational organisations. It is through their job descriptions and the solid foundation of regular, routine and continuous employment that we are able to more accurately define what an interpreter does, in contrast to the situation in previous centuries, and of particular interest for our purposes, to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the Age of Discovery.

It is indeed this lack of definition that enabled linguistic mediators to play such a variety of roles and to influence the course of exploration and conquest, as opposed to the desired invisibility of today's interpreter. Even with hindsight, we struggle to accurately define who an interpreter was or could be in those times, for there was a wide range of linguistic mediation tasks and settings that demanded different knowledges; skills and varying levels of competence. Selection procedures were also largely haphazard, for the essential characteristic of so many linguistic-mediated acts was to have to invent and improvise solutions, including the people who would broker them. Thus, interpreters were frequently those who happened to be in the right place at the right time, with the boldness to render their services, sometimes freely, often with their own personal objectives and gain in mind, but on numerous occasions, coerced. Since the boundaries of such mediation were entirely blurred, we cannot in all honesty claim that interpreters even fulfilled what one would automatically assume to be the basic criteria for such a role, of being fluent in more than one language and culture. How this absence of minimum standards affected performance and outcome is an issue to which we shall return in a subsequent section.

In short, the activities and profile of linguistic mediators in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were far removed from and much more ambiguous than those of today's interpreters. Nonetheless, an analogy can be drawn between the range of settings in which linguistic mediation occurred between the Portuguese and the peoples of Africa and Asia and the categories used to distinguish between different specialisations of interpreters nowadays, chiefly conference interpreters; community; business, or court interpreters. Some have a close correspondence: linguistic mediation in establishing commercial relations is still common today, whilst interpreters' involvement in

diplomatic negotiations is unquestioned. Yet, one of the fundamental issues for the analysis of linguistic mediated acts in exploration must be a discussion of the use of linguistic mediation to enable mutual recognition in initial contacts, which is necessarily a unique and unrepeatable moment.

Before we reach that point, however, in our opinion, to understand the development of linguistic and cultural mediation during this period, we should recall one of the earliest instances of the use of the term *"lingoa*" in the Portuguese language (see Chapter I). It was used to refer to a Portuguese individual who was living in an area temporarily under Spanish domination and who was collaborating with them. He became a *lingoa* when the Portuguese extracted information from him (under duress) about the Spanish forces. He can be likened to what we consider to be an interpreter today, only on the basis that he had knowledge of two linguistic and cultural realities, even though we shall also argue that even fluency in them was not a prerequisite for performing the required service.

There are in fact more differences than similarities between him and the current practitioner. His task was that of an informant; he was not involved in communication between two language groups nor undertook any mediation, but rather his knowledge was used by one side to try and gain advantage over the other. His words and ideas, therefore, were of his own choosing and not conditioned by the need to transpose messages uttered by another. It is this origin of the word *lingoa* which helps explain much of the Portuguese attitude and expectations towards their linguistic mediators during the Discoveries. Thus unlike modern interpretation, mediation was not intended as a practice of neutrality and rigour; be it neutrality of allegiance or neutrality or invisibility in conveying a message. In fact, in situations of conflict, the *lingoas* had to prove their loyalty to their masters, for the information they provided was quite literally in so many cases a matter of life or death. The spirit with which the Portuguese embarked on their first voyages was one of conquest and of achieving their goals by force. As referred to in chapter two, their mediators somehow had ties with both sides, which provided them with the requisite knowledge for their task, but there was no room to reveal conflicting affinities, for any perceived approximation to the other side was considered treachery.

Another mediator figure, which can be considered a forerunner of the interpreter in the voyages of Discovery is that of the *alfaqueque*, but in our opinion, once again there are more differences than similarities between their activities. His linguistic and cultural skills were essential to his task but his was a role of negotiation rather than direct two-way communication. He was given a mission of securing the release of prisoners-of-war, normally either through exchange or by paying a ransom, but was given a great deal of freedom as to how he should negotiate and what words or approach he should use. The two negotiating parties would not meet and there was no real dialogue, not even an asynchronous one, between them as the mission would often be completed in one return journey.

The one feature that draws the *alfaqueque* closer to our understanding of what an interpreter is, is that he was closer to neutrality than the *lingoa* mentioned above and was selected with his proximity to both sides in mind. We recall that among the first *alfaqueques* were distinguished members of Lisbon's Moorish community, Portuguese yet Moslem and thus sharing a religious affinity with the other party. Furthermore, they were allowed to travel freely and safely through enemy territory, in order to accomplish their mission, suggesting a degree of trust from both parties: the Portuguese who allowed them to carry out their activity without supervision and the Moors, who did not see these mediators as a spying threat.

What really distinguishes these two figures, *lingoa* and *alfaqueque,* that we have mentioned from the interpreters of the voyages of discovery is the fact that they interacted with Portugal's neighbours, who had been living alongside them for centuries. Thus, even though the vast majority of Portuguese did not speak Arabic, many of them would have some knowledge of Moorish culture and perhaps even some contact with Arabic speakers. These mediators were not plunging into the unknown: the Portuguese knew who the other language group were; which language they spoke, and what their mentality was. The type of interaction and the role of the interpreter were minimally predictable and thus could far more easily be controlled.

In the previous chapter of this study, we alluded to a certain lack of preparation of

mediation needs by the Portuguese, but we must not overlook the fact that they could not foresee some key elements of information on their sea-voyages, which are vital for the planning of any interpreter-mediated act: they did not know if the lands they visited were inhabited; who the participants in the possible meeting would be (in this context, meeting could not be a more appropriate word for we are truly discussing first encounters between hitherto mutually unknown peoples); which language they spoke; if there was anyone at all who had the skills and knowledge to provide some sort of linguistic mediation; when the encounter would take place and what kind of dialogue and underlying purposes there would be. Hence, improvisation and compromise on a number of levels were fundamental characteristics of these acts.

It would be simplistic to downgrade the first interpreter-mediated acts with the native peoples of Africa to the level of rudimentary. One has to consider what the alternatives were and how communication functioned before suitable linguistic mediators could be recruited. The explorers who left us narratives of their adventures along the coasts of West Africa refer to the frustration of not being able to achieve the aims of their mission owing to the impossibility of verbal dialogue. According to Cadamosto, Álvaro Velho and Gomes de Sintra in their first-hand accounts, when *linguas* were not at hand, the sailors would attempt to attract the locals through signs and mimicry. We can indeed compare the differing fortunes of Gomes de Sintra's party according to whether or not they were able to communicate through language. Their signs are not understood by one particular group and thus the attempt to exchange goods is thwarted: *"Os cristãos faziam-lhes sinais de paz, mas eles não entenderam. Mandaram-lhes os cristãos mercadorias que tinham trazido com eles a terra, mas eles receberam-na sem se disporem a falar."*[301] whereas, having sailed further down the coast to a place where their interpreters spoke the appropriate language, they were much more successful: *"Falaram os cristãos com essa gente através dos homens que traziam consigo e fizeram paz com eles, trocaram as suas mercadorias e trouxeram daí muitos*

301 Gomes de Sintra, Diogo *Descobrimento Primeiro da Guiné* ed. Nascimento, Aires A., Edições Colibri, Lisboa 2002, p.63. Our translation: "The Christians made signs of peace to them, but they did not understand. The Christians sent them wares they had brought ashore with them, but they took them without wishing to talk."

negros comprados. ”[302]

As referred to previously, Cadamosto also mentions their reluctance to engage and natives simply drifting away out of sight and into the hinterland through the inability to communicate. Ultimately, he ended his exploration when he realised that he had reached a land where the language was unintelligible to his interpreters and gesturing did not permit him to gather the information he sought or to trade.

These accounts of exploration reveal how eager the Portuguese were to find local people and to interact with them, as a source of information; as guides or navigators, and essentially to be able to trade with them. One can identify an improvement in the quality of interaction with the Africans, though, once they modified their approach from a warring one to a collaborative one in their quest for knowledge of the hinterland; rather than extract information by coercion, they started to seek partners among local leaders who would be willing to trade in merchandise, and slaves. The initial hostile encounters had proved by and large fruitless: news of the bellicose intentions of the Portuguese quickly spread along the coasts and, whenever possible, locals fled before the Portuguese could go ashore, leaving only their footprints, the most tenuous form of contact that one could imagine. Or natives would attack the Portuguese with poisoned arrows, lest the Portuguese fight them on the beaches, capture or slay them in any case, before a word was exchanged. In the absence of the desire to cooperate and communicate verbally, it was each man for himself leading to considerable loss of life on both sides and little economic gain for Henry the Navigator's men. Like Zurara's chronicle, Diogo Gomes de Sintra's account, albeit dictated and transcribed much later in life, provides us with the notion that on such voyages, the Portuguese sought a *lingoa* not to establish a dialogue but to inform them of the land; its people, and resources. He indicates that the Portuguese strategy changed upon the Prince's orders:

“Seguidamente, o senhor Infante, no seu conselho, dizia que daí

302 Ibid, p.63. Our translation: “The Christians spoke to these people through the men they had brought with them and made peace with them, they exchanged their wares and brought away with them many blacks they had purchased.”

em diante não travassem luta com a gente daquelas partes, mas fizessem aliança e trocassem mercadorias e assentassem paz com eles, pois a sua intenção era fazê-los cristãos. E mandou que as caravelas fossem de paz e não de guerra.”[303]

With this new approach, adopted in the mid-1440's, the type of linguistic mediation would certainly change, too. It was only through this linguistic interaction, a dialogue with advantages for both sides, that the Portuguese were able to achieve their aims. Two notes can be added to this conclusion: ironically, it was after making peace and trading with the local leader, Frangazick, that Gomes de Sintra was given the *lingoa* he had been searching for: Bucker[304], who acted as his guide to Cantor and provided him with information about the gold routes: “*São estas as coisas que me relataram os negros que comigo foram a Cantor. Interroguei-os sobre o caminho para ir às terras onde há ouro e quem eram os senhores daquela região.”*[305]

Secondly, contemporary accounts also reveal the cultural exchange between the Portuguese and Africans, visible in the following reference in Gomes de Sintra, *“Naquele campo, vimos mais de cinco mil miongas, como se diz na língua dos negros.”*[306] and the origins of an enriching and hybridising experience, which would culminate in the first generation of bilingual *mestiços* in West Africa.

Each new contact, however, could lead the Portuguese to resort sign to sign

303 Ibid, p.63. Our translation: “Then in his advice, the Prince said that henceforth, we should not fight with the people from those parts, but make alliances and exchange merchandise and make peace with them, since his intention was to make them Christians. And he ordered the caravels to go in peace and not in war.”

304 The slightly unusual spelling of these names might be attributed to Gomes de Sintra having dictated his memoirs to the German, Martin Behaim, who transcribed them. He appears to have copied them phonetically using German spelling.

305 Gomes de Sintra, Diogo op. cit. p. 75. Our translation: “These are the things that the blacks who went with me to Cantor told me. I asked them about the way to the land where there is gold and who were the lords of that land.

306 Ibid, p.71. Our translation: “We saw over five thousand miongas in that field, which is what they are called in the blacks' language.”

language once again, before any sort of verbal communication could be achieved. The few interpreters on board continued to be successful mediators on some occasions, but not on others, when they used knowledge of one language or dialect to attempt interaction with speakers of another. Whilst interpreter-mediated acts rarely involved more than two languages, one cannot ignore the fact that these sea voyages lasted many months and covered huge areas, with Gama stopping off at several places in Africa, for example, before crossing to India. Thus, many languages and interpreters were required in each fleet. Hein claims that Gama embarked some seventeen *"language specialists"* on his maiden voyage to India, counting "*four African speakers of African languages; three Portuguese speakers of Bantu (sic) and Arabic, and ten Portuguese degredados (convicts*)"[307], who would have to acquire local languages, in other words, over ten percent of the crew. This is clearly an optimistic view, concealing the true nature of manpower concerns: the convicts were sent above all to fight in the front line, as they generally formed the quota of human resources that the various local administrations *(concelhos)* of Portugal had to supply[308], and upon departure at best knew Hebrew (if Jews or New Christians) and some Arabic.

Thus, the wide range of language needs were far from adequately catered for, giving rise to linguistic mediation by approximation, that is to say, basing interpretation on the sporadic cognates with the closest known languages and words picked up from fleeting encounters with other passing seafarers. One can speculate about the mixture of signing; pointing, and drawing in the sand necessary and the power such communication devolved to the interpreter, who would necessarily be at the centre of any such meeting and with the ability to influence the content of the messages relayed, with there bring no possibility to verify the accuracy of his translating. Deliberate manipulation of such intercourse in their own favour could explain both how certain *lançados* and *degredados* came to rise to positions of influence with local leaders in

307 Hein, Jeanne *Portuguese Communication with Africans on the Searoute to India*, Terrae Incognitae, vol. 25, 1993.

308 cf. Coates, Timothy J *Convicts and Orphans: Forced and State-Sponsored Colonizers in the Portuguese Empire, 1550-1755* Stanford University Press, 2001.

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Western and Southern Africa and even in the Indian sub-continent and why the Portuguese would view them, also bearing in mind their shady past, with considerable suspicion.

In summary, the *lingoa* who accompanied the explorations played several different roles, of which pure linguistic and cultural mediation was just one, yet it was at the heart of his other tasks. From navigator and guide to informant and peace-broker, the *lingoa'*s tasks were sensitive and could place him in considerable peril. With greater possibilities of attracting locals, he was handed the delicate assignment of being the first to go ashore in a given place, for the purposes of obtaining essential information about it; either openly, when the locals seemed friendly or in disguise when it was clear they were not. Contemporary chroniclers' descriptions reveal that these missions were especially hazardous, as often those chosen for them did not really possess the necessary linguistic competences: some were practiclly unable to speak Arabic or other languages, but were chosen for amongst the crew they were deemed to either have the best understanding of it or to hold the least value to the Captain and the expedition. The essential idea of gathering information about a different culture through the medium of a second language, albeit on the basis of a rudimentary understanding, emboldened by quick-thinking and astute observation, and relaying it in another is still present in this task, although it is devoid of many of the other facets that we believe characterise the activity of interpreting as understood today, for instance, direct communication between two parties.

It appears that on his maiden voyage to India, Vasco da Gama did distinguish between those who were chosen by dint of their language skills, the “true interpreters” and the makeshift deportee ones: we recall that he sent Martim Afonso (one of the three Portuguese interpreters and the only one who supposedly knew African languages) ashore in Mozambique, only when he was sure that the natives were not hostile. When reaching Calicut, where he knows there are Moslems, he keeps his trusted Arabic interpreter, Fernão Martins, in the background. His loss would be a serious setback for the mission, so instead he prefers to send a *degredado*, a New Christian convict who had been banished and was of little consequence to the future of the venture, to test the waters, as we can glean from Castanheda's account:

> *"mandou hu dos degredados que leuaua a Calicut: assi pera que visse que terra era como pera fazer experiencia nele do gasalhado que lhe farião por ser Christão: porque cuydaua que auia Christãos em Calicut a cuja praya chegado ho degradado, começou logo de se ajuntar a gente a velo como a homem estranho: & perguntauão aos Malabares que yão coele que homem era. E eles dizião que lhe parecia mouro [...] & yão apos eles & algus q sabião arauia lhe falauão, mas ele não respõdia, porque não entendia: do que se espantauão, [...] E indo assi crendo que fosse mouro, leuarãno a pousada de dous mouros naturais de Tunez em Berberia, q forão ter a Calicut,"*[309]

This extract helps us understand how these prisoners became interpreters: they had to think on their feet and adapt quickly, pick up some words in the local tongue in order to survive, especially, as on occasions, they were left ashore for days on end or even abandoned by the Portuguese for months or until the next voyage passed, for the purposes of gathering information and meaningfully learning the local language. Many had their crimes pardoned for undertaking such dangerous endeavours and several went on to leave their mark on the history of the Portuguese Discoveries. Nonetheless, this is a further example of the need to improvise and how achieving adequate interaction determined survival (peace with the native people of another land rather than conflict, on an individual level).

309 Castanheda, Livro I, p.39. Our translation: "He sent one of the deportees that he was taking to Calicut: in order both to see what kind of land it was and to use him to test what kind of welcome they would give him as a Christian: because he supposed that there were Christians in Calicut, when the deportee reached its beach, a crowd quickly gathered to see this strange man: & they asked the Malabars who were accompanying him who he was. And they said that he looked like a Moslem... and they followed them and some who knew Arabic spoke to him, but he did not answer, because he could not understand: which they were surprised about, that as a Moslem he couldn't understand Arabic. And believing that he was a Moslem, they took him to the inn of two Moors from Tunis in Berberia, who had come to Calicut".

Once the presence of the Portuguese had been announced, the *lingoa* would act as an envoy to deliver a message to the local sovereign from the leader of the expedition. This was the start of an asynchronous and remote dialogue, which could span several days, yet there is a clear resemblance between this task and that of today's interpreter, in that the *lingoa* was not only responsible for establishing communication, but was charged with delivering specific contents dictated by one speaker to his interlocutor. In these instances, the dialogue was of the utmost importance as it would determine the result of the negotiations, without there being a pre-defined outcome. Castanheda, for example, describes in some detail the message that Vasco da Gama gave Diogo Diaz (the second Arabic interpreter on his expedition) to relay to the King of Calicut and the latter's response, thus informing us of the understanding of the *lingoa*'s task to be one in which he does not intervene in the substance (although there was of course no system of control). This was in fact a common instruction to interpreters, Couto and others have mentioned that they were neither to add or delete anything, a reference which half a century later, was to be included in Humphrey's map of the qualities of translation.[310]

In such circumstances, the way in which the *lingoa* delivered the messages, his cultural fluency, was absolutely crucial, but even the most talented diplomat would encounter difficulties in the delicate situations in which he would be placed, as the result of a certain obstinacy or underestimation of the importance of cultural knowledge by certain Portuguese figures. Furthermore, an accurate insight into the mentality of the other party could not be provided by all interpreters, particularly by those of Portuguese blood whose working language was Arabic, for they might have learned it in one part of the world (North Africa) but find themselves working in another (India or the Gulf region), where not only would they have to adapt to a new dialect but also unexpected customs. Local interpreters, however, could advise the Portuguese on such matters, but in this case were not necessarily heeded. Castanheda recounts the episode concerning da Gama's attempt to give the King of Calicut a present. The interpreter Bontaibo had tried to warn him that his gifts were not fit for such a powerful sovereign:

"E os mouros lhe disserão que não erão aqlas peças pera dar a

310 Cf. Pym, Anthony, op. cit. p. 3

hu rey tão poderoso como ho de Calicut, nem lhas desse, porq pareceria que fazia escarnio dele. E o mesmo lhe disse Botaibo: & estranhoulhe muyto não trazer oiytas coisas de preço, pois as auia em Portugal; […] & Botaibo lhe coselhou q posto q não desse presente a el rey que trabalhasse por lhe falar"[311]

but da Gama insisted on presenting them anyway. He sent Diogo Diaz with them, who was made to wait four days on shore, going to the palace daily, before he was received by the King and when he was, he was afraid that the King would have him executed. The gifts were scorned by the King and Diaz taken hostage until an appropriate payment was made.[312] This episode exemplifies the additional perils that interpreters endured in this role of unaccompanied messengers, for undoubtedly they were burdened with the responsibility for the content of the message, when they were merely following orders, a situation which is much less likely to arise nowadays, when interpreting occurs with the interlocutors in each other's presence.

As mentioned above, another way in which interpreters were placed in danger was by the fact that the gathering of information was often conducted covertly in order to plan (military) strategy, throughout the Portuguese presence in India. Hence, those with linguistic and cultural skills became spies, the suppliers of intelligence, often military intelligence. Different guises and covers were used, according to the occasion:

"foy acordado que pera que melhor soubessem ho que auião de fazer, mandassem a terra Baltesar filho de Gaspar que seruia de lingoa, com dissimulação de ir buscar refresco pera que soubesse como estauão os da terra com Mirocem, & ho que ele

311 Castenheda, Fernão Lopes de, op. cit., Vol. I. pp.66-7. Our translation: "And the Moslems told him that those items were not fit to give to such a powerful king as the King of Calicut, and not to give them to him, because it would seem as though they were scorning him. And Bontaibo said the same thing to him: and it seemed strange to him that he had not brought other valuable things, because there were in Portugal; […] & Bontaibo advised him that despite not giving the king a present, he should work to get to talk to him"

312 cf. Castenheda, Fernão Lopes de, op. cit., vol. I pp 77-8.

determinaua. E Baltesar partio logo & soube do tanadar, & dalgus mouros amigos de dom Lourenço que Mirocem estaua prestes a pelejar coele"[313]

Linguists were also responsible for conducting peace negotiations. The army leaders would not confront each other, but instead send their envoys to broker the conditions of a ceasefire. These envoys had to speak the language of the other party and thus those that were chosen for this perilous job whereby they had to enter the enemy camp were primarily those renowned for their linguistic talent and loyalty.

Clearly, local leaders had their own spies and informants who would gather intelligence on the strength of the Portuguese forces. They are the focus of much suspicion on the part of the Portuguese, but were not entirely shunned because as they were intermediaries, who as Rocha[314] points out did not entirely belong to one side or the other, they could prove useful as suppliers of intelligence and their allegiance could change (an issue which was amply discussed in the previous chapter concerning rewards and loyalty). Cidi Ale was a notorious character who managed to play the Portuguese off against his master Malik Ayaz, receiving rewards from both sides:

"este cidiale he mao homem, e porque sabe a nossa lymguajem, recolhe muitas cousas d amtre nós, que eu nam queria que os mouros soubesem; porém ele achou o teor da nova que de lá veyo, e outra mudamça nos lugares que diso ouueram notycia"[315]

313 Castenheda, Fernão Lopes de, op. cit., vol. II, p.389. Our translation: "It was agreed that in order to have a better idea as to what they should do, they would send Balthasar, Gaspar's son who was acting as interpreter, ashore, under the pretence of fetching supplies, so that he could see how the locals related to Mirocem, & what he was planning. And Balthasar left straightaway and learned from the rent collector, and some Moslem friends of Dom Lourenço that Mirocem was planning an imminent attack.

314 cf. Rocha, Sara *Dinâmicas do Poder dos Língua/Intérpretes na Àsia de João de Barros* (unpublished Master's thesis at Universidade Aberta). Accessed at *https://repositorioaberto.uab.pt/handle/10400.2/2100* on 16 May 2014

315 CAA, vol. I, p.339. Our translation: "This Cidi Ale is a bad man, and because he knows our language, he gathers a lot of information from us, which I don't want the Moslems to know; however,

Prior to this, Cidi Ale had famously intervened on behalf of the Portuguese prisoners taken at Chaul, convincing them not to convert to Islam and promising to secure their release. As a Moor who had lived in Granada, he had a sharp insight into the Portuguese mentality and thus also advised Malik Ayaz on the best approach to obtain the maximum benefit from the captives, which would also of course be reflected on him:

> *"E hu mouro granadi chamado Cideale, [...] disse a Meliquejaz que goardasse muyto bem os nossos, porque ainda lhe auião daproueytar pera por eles auer paz cõ ho visorey: poque sabia certo que os nossos erão taes que auião de vingar muy be os forão mortos. E que do tempo q viuera e Grâda sabia que erão gente q nunca começarão guerra assi contra mouros como cõtra cristãos que a nã leuassem auante [...] . E cõselhaua aos nossos que se não tornassem mouros: ele lhes daria maneyra com que se resgatassem."*[316]

Thus, the military theatre offered ample opportunities during the Portuguese Expansion for those with linguistic skills to act as double-agents, in complete opposition to the current concept of interpreters as neutral and invisible. During the frequent attempts to dislodge the Portuguese from the strongholds they had conquered or occupied by besieging them (just as the Portuguese themselves had done in turn) spying missions were carried out under cover of darkness and secret messages conveyed by those who oscillated between the two camps; languages, and cultures, and the two religions, in the no-man's land depicted earlier.

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he told us the news from the other camp, and what changes they had heard about in other places."

316 CAA, vol. II, pp 399-400. Our translation: "And a Moslem from Granada called Cidiale, *[...]* told Malik Ayaz to take good care of our men because he would be able to use them to make peace with the Viceroy; because he knew that our lot were sure to seek revenge of those that were killed. And from the time when he lived in Granada, he knew that they were people who would never start a war against either Moslems or Christians without seeing it through: *[...]* And he advised our men not to become Moslems: he would find a way to ransom them."

Indeed, cultural literacy; judging the fine balance to be achieved to stay on the right side of both parties; the ability to advise on communication strategy, were all particularly important on exploratory missions, with a notable example being that of the initial approaches to China. The Embassy led by Tomé Pires could go down in interpreting history as one of the most spectacular failures in cultural understanding and mediation. Whilst Pires had spent years gathering information to prepare his mission, he was completely naive with regard to the Chinese reception of his party. He needed interpreters to establish cordial and respectful relations with the Chinese and inform him of how to behave towards local and Imperial authorities, in particular how to observe the strict protocol surrounding foreign visitors. The intermediaries he recruited, however, were completely unsuitable for the task, for they were basically small-time seafarers, plying their trade far from China and had unlikely had any prior contact with the formality and etiquette of the Chinese court. Therefore, they had no more idea than the Portuguese about how to behave, and in fact their crude entrance and their disregard for ritual greetings led to an immediate punishment and a course in protocol:

> *"O cabecilha saiu de longe para os receber mas não lhes fez genuflexões. O censor metropolitano e o grande coordenador Chen Jin chegou mais tarde sozinho e mandou dar 20 bastonadas no intérprete, dizendo ao superintendente do comércio marítimo: Estes bárbaros vieram de longe, atraídos pela admiração da nossa civilização, de maneira que desconhecem as cerimónias da nossa corte celestial. Sendo eu um alto funcionário nomeado pela corte, mando-os receber durante três dias a instrução protocolar ao Templo Guangxiao."*[317]

317 *Gu Yingxiang, Jingxuzhai Xiyinglu (Antologia de Estimação do Tempo da Sala da Nulidade Silenciosa)*, Tainan, Zhuangyan Wenhua Shiye Youxiangongsi, 1995, vol. XII, pp. 19-20, apud. Jin Guo Ping and Wu Zhiliang, *Uma Embaixada vom Dois Embaixadores – Novos Dados Orientais sobre Tomé Pires e Hoja Yasan*, Administração n.º 60 vol. XVI, 2003-2.º, 685-716. Our translation: "The gang leader came from a great distance to receive them but did not kneel. Later, the city magistrate and chief coordinator Chen Jin arrived alone and ordered that the interpreter be beaten twenty times with a truncheon, telling the supervisor of maritime commerce: These savages came from afar,

Most Portuguese sources on the ultimate failure of this Embassy point to the fact that the five Chinese interpreters who accompanied it and who the Portuguese had recruited in Malacca, mis-translated the letter from King Manuel to the Chinese emperor, in order to adapt it to Chinese expectations, namely that the Portuguese king was sending a tributary embassy. It was not really a mis-translation, though, since the King's letter was sealed, the interpreters would not have been able to read its contents (Tomé Pires could of course have told them verbally). Furthermore, presumably nobody at the Imperial Court would have been able to discover such a discrepancy, for nobody spoke Portuguese. Therefore, as Ping and Zhiliang point out, that was not the reason why the interpreters were eventually executed, rather it was because they had helped the Portuguese party to try and circumvent the Chinese restrictions on embassies to only tributary states, by claiming to be an embassy from Malacca.

Contemporary Chinese sources frequently refer to the interpreter Hoja Yasan as the ambassador, and never to Tomé Pires, because he was an Asian and thus conformed to their idea of what a Malaccan should look like. Rui Manuel Loureiro [318] concurs that it was Hoja Yasan and the interpreters in particular that initiated the subterfuges to try and assuage Chinese hostility towards these foreign visitors. The Chinese sources referred to by Loureiro claim that Yasan had managed to establish cordial relations with the authorities when arriving in Canton, by telling them that the Embassy had been sent by the King of Malacca, who was a vassal of the Chinese emperor, whereas in reality, the Portuguese had ousted the King.

Additionally, these ethnic Chinese *iurabaças* or interpreters recruited in Malacca to accompany the Portuguese on their voyage to Canton were not integrated into the party. Cristóvão Vieira, a member of the party who wrote his testimony of events from a prison cell, recalls that the party had the following composition:

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attracted by their admiration of our civilisation, thus they are ignorant of the cerimones of our celestial court. As I am a high official and appointed by the court, I order that their receive instruction in protocol for three days at the Guangxiao temple."

318 Loureiro, Rui Manuel *A Malograda Embaixada de Tomé Pires a Pequim* in *Portugal e a China* coord. Dos Santos Alves, Jorge M., Fundação do Oriente, 1998 pp 44-45

> *"a gente que ficou em companhia de Tomé Pires foram Duarte Fernandes, Francisco de Budoya, Cristóvão de Almeida, Pedro de Faria e Jorge Álvares, todos portugueses, eu Cristóvão Vieira, pérsio de Ormuz, doze moços servidores e cinco jurabaças."*[319]

The interpreters come last in the list after the servants, reflecting the hierarchy also given by Gaspar Correia in his description of the contemporary expedition led by Dom Rodrigo de Lima to find Prester John. This detachment is explained by the fact that not only were they Chinese but also probably Moslem.

Their deceit would have been uncovered both by a rival embassy sent by the tributary King of Malacca deposed by the Portuguese and King Manuel's signature on the letter. The exact contribution of the five interpreters to this plot is unclear, but either there had been a lack of communication and planning between them and the Portuguese, or they tragically miscalculated the importance of observing protocol. We may also surmise that Tomé Pires committed the same kind of mistake (he also grossly underestimated the military force that would be needed to conquer the Chinese Empire[320]). We have not found any reference to the interpreters' knowledge of Portuguese, which at best could only have been a functional knowledge for their commercial purposes in Malacca and the main vehicle of communication with them could have indeed been Arabic (as in the first contacts with Chinese traders in Malacca), meaning that only one of the Portuguese (and not Tomé Pires) would have been able to speak to them directly.

This episode and that of Vasco da Gama's when he arrived in India and wished to present his feeble gift to the King of Calicut are just two examples of the rather frequent *faux pas* committed by the Portuguese, which suggests the importance of cultural

319 D'Intino, Raffaella (ed.), *Enformação das cousas da China* Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, 1989. Our translation: "The people who accompanied Tomé Pires, were Duarte Fernandes, Francisco de Budoya, Cristóvão de Almeida, Pedro de Faria and Jorge Alvares, all Portuguese, I, Cristóvão Vieira, a Persian from Hormuz, twelve servants and five interpreters."

320 Cf. Loureiro, op. cit.

mediation but also a certain disdain that the Portuguese navigators had for it. After all, they were not expecting friendship from the peoples they visited, but for the most part believed that they would achieve their aims through force.

The disaster of Tomé Pires' Embassy could also be attributed to the lack of specific instructions for his interpreters. It appears that they themselves decided upon which course of action to take: Hoja Yasan passed himself off as the Ambassador, perhaps without Tomé Pires realising exactly what was going on or rather passively allowing Yasan to take the lead. Often, however, the Portuguese sought to limit interpreters' autonomy, particularly by one of two means: rather than ask them to convey a long and frequently rather detailed message orally, a letter would be dictated and immediately transcribed into the other language, presumably ensuring greater fidelity and avoiding important omissions. Furthermore, this letter could be dictated in the presence of more than one *lingoa*, in order to guarantee that it would be checked. Another possibility was to explicitly instruct interpreters not to add anything to the original[321], but not necessarily for the reasons defended by Couto, rather to prevent the interpreters from giving away any secrets, albeit unintentionally.

Indeed, throughout the age of Discoveries, the term *lingoa* denoted a linguist with a broad range of functions, many of which have been described as we considered interpreter-mediated acts for military and exploration purposes, yet, one should add that there was not necessarily a distinction, as there is now, between oral and written mediator. A *lingoa* provided he knew how to write the foreign language (and one must consider that the majority would have learned languages by ear without formal study), could act as both interpreter and translator. Letters of reply could be dictated in one language to the interpreter, who would render them immediately into the other for a secretary to pen the letter,[322] or they could also be prepared in the local language

321 Cf. Couto, Dejanirah, op. cit.

322 For example, this passage taken from *Navegação às Indias Orientais escrita em portuguuez por Thomé Lopes. 1502* in *Colecção de Notícias para a História e Geografia das Nações Ultramarinas que vivem nos domínios portugueses ou lhe são vizinhos, tomo 2º*, Lisbon 1812 p.167. *"Depois de feita a agoada mandou El Rei escrever ao Almirante e eu, Thomé Lopes, Escrivão da nao de Ruy Mendes de Brito, fui chamado à sua presença, e alli escrevi a carta dizendo-me Luis de Moura por parte do*

without the interpreter's presence, implying that the linguistic mediator would have sight-translated them upon his return to the Portuguese camp.

Even today, the boundaries of the interpreting profession are not always clear-cut, yet most writers and practitioners would agree that the essential function of an interpreter is to transpose an oral message from one language to another and that are a limited number of modes of interpreting: simultaneous; consecutive and *chuchottage* being the most commonly and often the only ones cited. There has been very little analysis of the act of interpreting itself during the Discoveries, since only first-hand accounts would be able to provide us with accurate information concerning the techniques used, but our survey here reveals that for explorers and conquerors, correct and nuanced use of language and method was of secondary importance to the conveying of ideas and the ability of the interpreter to achieve the desired results, often as much dependant on individual qualities and inter-cultural skills as interpreting ability.

Rocha has claimed that interpreters performed consecutive interpreting and that they relied on prodigious memories to do so[323], yet we cannot back up such a statement with evidence. It is true that interpreters performed a type of consecutive interpreting, but it bears little resemblance to the modern form or method. As stated above, it was often asynchronous: the delivery of a message several hours later and on the basis of the overriding ideas, that is to say, the level and type of accuracy required was completely different. Moreover, since there were no guidelines concerning working methods, the interpreter could mould the task to his individual capabilities, adapting it to his language and negotiating skills, and his powers of memory.

On the other hand, interpreters would have frequently interpreted dialogues alternately using a form of whispered simultaneous interpretation *(chuchottage)* and

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Rei o que queria que eu escrevesse." Our translation: "After having watered, the King ordered a letter to be written to the Admiral and I, Thomé Lopes, Secretary of Ruy Mendes de Brito's carrack, was called to his presence and wrote the letter, with Luis de Moura telling me what to write on behalf of the King." (Luis de Moura had been left with the King of Malindi in 1500 and already knew the language well.)

323 Cf. Rocha, Sara, op. cit.

consecutive. When chroniclers inform us that the Portuguese representative told the local ruler, through his interpreter, one can imagine that the Portuguese would have conveyed the message at low or normal volume to the *lingoa,* standing by his side, who would have then announced it in a louder voice to enable all those present to hear, as generally speaking, the interpreter working for the Portuguese would interpret the word's said by them into the other language. The impact that this system had on directionality was discussed in the previous section. The local ruler on occasion would have his own interpreter, who would proceed in the same fashion, but on others, the Portuguese *lingoa* would be working in both directions and so would presumably be able to simultaneously whisper the replies to his employer. In smaller gatherings in less formal circumstances, with perhaps one interpreter working for both sides, interpretation could be in short consecutive segments or in whispered simultaneous, but with no guidelines concerning method, the situation would have been jointly managed on the spot by interpreter and participants, requiring constant adaptation on the part of the linguist.

4.3 INTERPRETERS FOR AND FROM THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS

We recall our earlier references to the fact that one of the overriding aims of the Portuguese Discoveries was to spread the Word of God and convert pagans to Christianity and that Bowen classifies evangelisation as one of the essential activities in which interpreters have been involved during the course of history. We shall propose that this area of cultural and linguistic mediation warrants a separate reflection from interpreting for navigators; merchants, or the *Estado da Índia*, on account of differences at several levels, although one cannot ignore the fact that political missions and embassies would often have overlapping objectives and that religious interpreters (members of the clergy) would be borrowed by different military-administrative authorities.

As a prelude, we shall briefly consider the specific context in which this work was undertaken. Clergymen did not play a significant part in the fifteenth century voyages along the African coast, although attempts to evangelise were made by some explorers,

notably Cadamosto who tried to convert King Budumel (undoubtedly with the help of one of the interpreters he had brought with him from Portugal)[324] It was only in 1533, with the creation of the Diocese of Cape Verde (in the same year as the Diocese of Goa) that the Catholic Church established a permanent presence in the region and even then, missionary work on the West African mainland only began several decades later, with one of the main concerns being to correct the sinful behaviour of the *lançados.* There was greater missionary activity in the Kingdom of Congo, where the first Portuguese expeditions quickly converted the local King, who wrote to his Portuguese counterpart, King Manuel, requesting help in spreading the faith, namely by ensuring that there would be interpreters and training for his people in theology.

Wherever the Portuguese went in the East, however, the religious orders accompanied them, with members of the clergy embarking on the caravels, initially to attend to the spiritual needs of the crew and the first settlers. Subsequently, the discovery of new peoples (pagans rather than Moslems) meant new souls to be saved through conversion to Christianity. Four Franciscan priests reached India in 1500 aboard Pedro Alvares Cabral's fleet. No sooner had they arrived than they realised that without any knowledge of the local language, their capacity to convert would be limited: *"mas os religiosos e sacerdotes darmada, aquem pertencia a conversam delles, nam sabiam a lingoa da tera que era o principal instrumento".*[325] One of those who survived the massacre in Calicut, Brother Luis do Salvador, began the work of conversion by preaching in the interior, in the kingdom of Vijayanagara.[326] He undertook a first mission in 1506, accompanied by his nephew, Pero Leitão, about whom we do not know whether or not he acted as interpreter,[327] but on the second in

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324 cf. Rema, Pe. Henrique *História das Missões Católicas da Guiné,* Editorial Franciscana, Braga 1982.

325 Barros, João de *Décadas da Ásia* Jorge Rodriguez, 1628, I, V, iv, fl.92. Our translation: *"but the fleet's clergy and priests, who were charged with their conversion, did not know the local language which was their main instrument".*

326 Referered to as *Bisnagá* in coeval Portuguese documents. cf. Silva Rego, António da *Documentos para a História das Missões do Padroado Português do Oriente* Agência Geral das Colónias, Lisbon 1947, vol. I, p.34.

327 cf. Alves, Jorge Manuel dos Santos *A Cruz, Os Diamantes e Os Cavalos; Frei Luis do Salvador, Primeiro Missionário e Embaixador Português em Vijayanagar* in Mare Liberum, 5, July 1993.

1510, he did take a linguist with him, Lourenço Prego.[328]

The first specific reference we have found to an interpreter working for the religious orders in India, though, pre-dates Prego and concerns the interpretation of a sermon delivered to the Saint Thomas Christians on the Malabar coast in January 1504 by another Franciscan and which was witnessed and recorded first-hand by Giovanni d'Empoli:[329] *"logo que a missa se acabou começou a frade a pregação; e o intérprete (que era homem muito capaz) se o frade dizia bem ainda interpretava muito melhor, da maneira que a cousa continuava com grande fervor e zelo."*[330] The interpreter will remain anonymous, yet we cannot ignore the fact that a competent linguist (in the opinion of Empoli) in Malayalam and Portuguese was found just over five years after the first Portuguese set foot in India and that he was vital for enthusing the gathering.

Whilst the Portuguese were interested in bringing the Saint Thomas Christians into the Catholic fold, their main objective was conversion in order to secure Christian allies. Pedro Alvares Cabral drew something of a blank in this field during his mission, but the Portuguese did obtain some successes during the early years of their presence in India, such as with the conversion of the King of Cannanore. Pursuit of this aim also compelled Afonso de Albuquerque to patch up his feud with Duarte Barbosa, when factor at Cannanore, by calling upon him in 1514 in view of his competence as an interpreter to try to persuade the King of Cochin to become a Christian.[331] This is a first example of how a lay or state interpreter could also be called upon to further the religious aims of the Portuguese expansion.

Two years previously, we have the opposite example of a man of the cloth

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328 cf. DHMP, vol. I, p.34.

329 The factor of one of the ships in Afonso de Albuquerque's fleet that sailed to India in 1503.

330 Empoli, Giovanni d' Viagem às Índias Orientais in *Colecção de Notícias para a História e Geografia das Nações Ultramarinas que vivem nos domínios portugueses ou lhe são vizinhos, tomo 2º,* Typographia da Academia das Sciencias, Lisbon 1812, p.225. Our translation: "As soon as the mass ended, the friar began his sermon; and the interpreter (who was very capable) if the friar spoke well, interpreted even better, so that it all carried on with a great deal of fervour and zeal."

331 cf. CAA vol. I., p.376.

intervening in delicate negotiations on behalf of the civil authorities: following the shipwreck of Afonso de Noronha's vessel bound for Malacca, Sultan Mohamad Shah I took the group of survivors hostage. The Franciscan friar, António do Loureiro, who had already spent several years in the East, acted as the *alfaqueque*, that is to say he negotiated their release.[332] Thus, whilst we can and should discuss oral linguistic mediation for religious purposes separately, we cannot easily classify interpreters as being religious or state interpreters, for many, particularly the most able, could be requested to provide their services in different fields during the course of their careers, (and would accept, since it was in their and their habitual employer's interest to foster a good relationship with the other entity), reflecting the primacy of language skills over thematic specialisation, which is still the basis for selecting many conference interpreters today, but which as we shall see below was often a source of frustration to the religious orders.

Whilst Franciscans and others undertook some mass christenings, their activities centred on the soldiers and other Portuguese living in garrison forts, where evidently interpreters were not required. Indeed, it was some time before missionary work in the East began in earnest, as the result of an appeal that was made to the Pope by King John III to send clergymen for this work. This appeal came in the wake of Goa's elevation to a diocese in 1533 (having previously come under the umbrella of Lisbon and then Funchal) and the founding of the Society of Jesus in 1534 and its establishment in Rome. The Jesuits were recommended to the Portuguese monarch for this mission and the first brethren including Francis Xavier sailed for India in 1542, on board the ship that was taking the new Governor, Martim Afonso de Sousa, to his post. This succinctly explains why there was a strong connection between the *Estado da Índia*, the Portuguese language and this particular religious order.[333]

Francis Xavier quickly became aware of the challenges facing Christianity in India: the Portuguese settlers had lost their way, whilst local Christians, *christãos da terra*,

332 cf. Correia, Gaspar, op. cit., Vol.I, pp 200-3, and for full details, D'Cruz, Sharon Jacqueline *Franciscans in Goa* (unpublished doctoral thesis submitted to Goa University 10.2.03) accessed at http://library.unigoa.ac.in:8081/xmlui/handle/123456789/199 on 29 April 2014

333 Xavier of course was originally from Navarre in Northern Spain.

converted by his predecessors, were only Christians in name and knew little or nothing of Christian doctrine or values, primarily because they could not understand Portuguese:

> *"Perguntando-lhes, acerca dos artigos da fé, o que criam, ou que mais tinham agora que eram cristãos que quando eram gentios, não obtinha deles outra resposta senão a de que eram cristãos e que, por não entender a nossa língua, não sabiam a nossa lei nem o que haviam de crer"*[334]

Clearly, linguistic mediation was to be of the utmost importance for spreading and strengthening the Christian faith, meaning that the brethren had two possible options: they had to either find competent interpreters in quantity and quality or learn the local languages themselves. Rather sweeping statements have been made in the past, dismissing the need for religious interpreters in the East because the clergy quickly became fluent in the local tongues. They undoubtedly acquired them with greater ease than their compatriots in the military or administration, more concerned with worldly pursuits. Firstly, religious orders were able to plan ahead for they knew what their language needs were, studying them (once grammar books became available) during the interminable sea voyages from Europe or even starting to learn Japanese from fellow travellers between India and Japan.[335] Secondly, some Jesuits, by virtue of their characteristic discipline, did indeed excel in Oriental languages, to the extent that not only could they dispense with the services of an interpreter, but they themselves became interpreters, either for their ecclesiastical hierarchy (Brother Luis Fróis, for example, interpreted for the Jesuit supervisor or *visitador,* Alessandro Valignano, during his first tour of Japan) or the Portuguese state (Brother Rodolfo Aquaviva quickly became fluent

334 Letter from St. Francis Xavier to the Companions Residing in Rome sent from Cochin, India, 15.1.1544 in *Obras Completas*, Editorial Apostalado da Oração. Braga, 2006. Our translation: "When I asked them about the articles of our faith and what they believed or what they had gained now that they were Christians and no longer pagans, the only response I obtained was that they were Christians, and that as they did not understand our language, they did not know our creed nor what they were supposed to believe."

335 This was the case of João Fernandes, who accompanied Francis Xavier to Japan and acted as the first "in-house" interpreter for the mission there. cf. Fróis, Luis, *História de Japam*, Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, 1976, Vol. I, p. 24.

in Persian at the Moghul Court of Akbar and alongside side his duties as the Emperor's theological tutor acted as his diplomatic messenger to the *Estado da Índia).*[336]

Yet, for the most part, linguistic and cultural mediation was a continual dilemma for the Jesuits, with as many failures as there were successes, vividly illustrated by Francis Xavier's own experiences. On the one hand, he is credited by co-religionists as being blessed with the gift of tongues, whereby he could understand and make himself understood amongst hitherto unknown language communities:

> *"People were led to hear him and receive the truths which he preached by finding a man who could never have learnt their language addressing himself to them with ease, and by observing that bystanders whose dialect differed from their own were as well able to understand him as themselves."*[337]

Yet even Coleridge accepts that Xavier was unable to dispense with interpreters for ordinary, everyday conversation or, on occasions, public sermons. Indeed during his early experiences as a missionary on the Coromandel coast, he frequently expressed his frustration at the limitations placed on him during the absence of his regular interpreter and having to resort to makeshift ones whose Portuguese was inadequate:

> *"Aqui ando entre esta gente só, sem topaz. António está doente em Manapar. Rodrigo e António são os meus topazes. Por aqui podeis ver a vida que levo e as exortações que posso fazer, que nem eles me entendem nem menos os entendo [eu]: [por] aqui podeis ver as falas que a esta gente faço."*[338]

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336 cf. Hoyland, J.S. & Bannerjee S. N. (Trans. & Ed.), *The Commentary of Father Monserrate, S.J. On his journey to the Court of Akbar* Asian Educational Services, New Delhi/Madras, 1992, pp. 49-50, 119, 172.

337 Coleridge, Henry James *The Life and Letters of Saint Francis Xavier* Burns and Oates, London, 1872.

338 Letter from St. Francis Xavier to Francis Mansilhas, Manapar, 29.8.1544 in *Obras Completas.* Our Translation "I go alone here amongst these people, without an interpreter. António is ill in

Similarly upon his arrival in Kagoshima, Francis Xavier lamented his inability to preach to the Japanese, declaring himself rendered useless by the language barrier: *"Aguora somos entre ellos como unas estatuas (...) e nosotros por no entender a lengua, nos callamos."* [339] He and the Provincial Superior, Henrique Henriques, frequently exhorted their fellow brothers to take up the study of languages so that they would not spurn the excellent opportunities for evangelisation, but Japanese was unquestionably more daunting than the languages of the Indian sub-continent and held back their progress: *"No tempo em que estiverão em Cangoxima, aonde começarão a lansar logo os primeiros fundamentos da fé, padecião grande detrimento na carência da lingua."*[340]

Some years later, the head of the Mission in Japan, Francisco Cabral, from the Azores, declared that it was impossible for Europeans to learn Japanese and proposed that a college be set up to train Japanese interpreters.[341] The college never actually saw the light of day, as others who followed Cabral, such as the Supervisor or *visitador* Alessandro Valignano disagreed with him and urged the Provincials to pursue a language-learning policy. Even so, it was not until the very end of the sixteenth century that a Head of Mission in Japan was able to operate without an interpreter, some fifty years after Xavier's stay.

The latter invented some ingenious methods to mitigate or even circumvent the language barrier, without having recourse to the inadequate interpreters mentioned

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Manapar. Rodrigo and António are my interpreters. So you can easily imagine what kind of life I lead here, what preaching is possible, when they don't understand me nor less still I them, thus you can see from this, what I preach to the people."

339 Fróis, Luís *História de Japam* Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, 1976, Vol. I, Footnote, p.24. Our translation: "Now we are like statues among them (…) and because we do not understand the language, we remain silent."

340 Ibid, p. 24. Our translation: "During the time they were in Kagoshima, where they immediately began to lay the first foundations of the faith, they suffered a great disadvantage through their shortcomings in the language."

341 Cooper, Michael J. *Rodrigues the Interpreter, An Early Jesuit in Japan and China* Weatherhill, Tokyo 1974, p. 53

earlier. On the Coromandel Coast, he painstakingly had the Creed, Ten Commandments and the other main liturgical pieces translated into Tamil, a process which took some four months. He then learned the passages by heart, so that in turn he could catechise his flock:

> *"Como eles não me entendessem nem eu a eles, por ser a sua língua natural a malabar e a minha a viscainha, juntei os que entre eles eram mais sabedores e escolhi pessoas que entendessem a nossa língua e a sua, deles. E depois de nos termos juntado muitos dias, com grande trabalho, traduzimos as orações, começando pelo modo de se benzer confessando as três pessoas serem um só Deus, depois o Credo, Mandamentos, Pai-nosso, Avè-Maria, Salvè-Rainha, e a Confissão geral, do latim em malabar. Depois de as ter traduzido na sua língua e sabê-las de cor, ia por todo o lugar com uma campainha na mão, juntando todos os moços e homens que podia e, depois de os ter juntado, ensinava-os cada dia duas vezes."*[342]

He claimed not to need interpreters for certain tasks, such as christenings, as there was little or no speaking involved:

> *"Baptizo as crianças que nascem, e aos outros que acho por baptizar; para isto não hei mister topaz; e os pobres sem topaz me dão a entender suas necessidades, e eu em vê-los, sem topaz os entendo; para as couzas mais principaes não tenho*

342 Letter from St. Francis Xavier to the Companions Residing in Rome sent from Cochin, India, 15.1.1544 in *Obras Completas,* Editorial Apostalado da Oração. Braga, 2006. Our translation: "As they could not understand me nor I they, for their natural language was Malabar and mine Biscay, I gathered together the wisest of them and chose people who understood our and their languages. And after having met for many days, and with a great deal of work, we translated the prayers, starting with the way of crossing oneself, confessing the three people to be one God, then the Creed, the Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, Salve Regina, and the general Confession, from Latin to Malabar. After having translated them into their language and learned them by heart, I would go from place to place with a hand-bell, gathering all the boys and men I could, and after having brought them together, I would teach them twice a day."

necessidade de topaz.''[343]

but being able to preach freely and hear confessions in the local language normally required several years of study.

Another strategy that Francis Xavier used to make himself understood was to dumb down his Portuguese, to place it at the same level as that of his audience. He gave instructions for other preachers in different places, from Goa to Malacca, to do the same thing:

> *''Se alguns pregadores houver em casa, fareis que sejam eles os que as ensinem, para que preguem por exemplo e dêem aos que não são pregadores bom odor de si, falando o português como o falam os escravos, da maneira que eu o fazia quando aí estava.* ''[344]

Little by little, the brethren succeeded in overcoming the language barrier, albeit with the exceptions of those who simply did not have a gift for learning languages, regardless of their efforts: *''O Irmão Estevão de Goes, parecendo-me que por fraqueza de cabeça nom poderia prender a lingoa.''*[345] To facilitate the process in Japan, a deliberate policy of shipping young Portuguese orphans to the East before they had completed their studies was implemented from the 1550's onwards, as it was believed that they would be more successful in acquiring the new language. Yet, with a high

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343 Letter to Francisco Manilhas, Punicale, 29.8.1544 in *Obras Completas,* p.181. Our translation: "I christen the children that are born, and the others I find who have not been christened; I do not need an interpreter for this; and the poor souls make me undertand their needs without an interpreter, and upon seeing them, I can understand them without an interpreter. For the main things, I do not need an interpreter."

344 Letter to Father Paulo Camerino (Goa) from Kagoshima, 5.11.1549 in *Obras Completas*, p. 537. Our translation: "If you have preachers in your house, make sure that they teach them, so that they preach by example and give those that are not preachers a good impression of themselves, by speaking Portuguese as slaves speak it, as I did when I was there."

345 DI, vol. V, p. 682. Letter from Henrique Henriques Mannar, 29-30 Dec, 1562. Our translation: "Brother Estêvão Goes appears to be too weak in the head to learn the language."

mortality rate from such inhospitable climates (Xavier himself survived only ten years in the Orient before passing away at the age of forty six) and frequent martyrdoms (Rodolfo Acquaviva at the age of thirty six, for example, or Brother Gonçalo Garcia, a Eurasian born at Bassein in Portuguese India, who was considered to be the best linguist and interpreter of the Franciscans and was among the twenty six martyrs of Nagasaki on 5 February 1597)[346] there was a constant need for replacements. Consequently, the religious orders could quickly find themselves back to square one on the language front.

Whilst the Franciscans tended to take up residence in the main centres of the Portuguese-speaking population, in particular Goa, the Jesuits quickly fanned out, splitting up into groups of one or two in order to cover as much of the Malabar and Coromandel coasts as possible. This increased their need for linguistic mediators, for until the priests learned the local language, they would need interpreters in every location to assist them in their essential tasks, especially for preaching and hearing confessions. The Jesuits resisted the use of interpreters, for many had little faith in their abilities, albeit for very different reasons to the mistrust shown by the Portuguese navigators. Moreover, Valignano had instructed the missionaries to learn local languages as quickly and thoroughly as possible to obviate the need for them, for the use of an intermediary rendered the priests less effective:*"el principal modo de ayudar los christianos es con las pláticas familiares y confessiones, las quales no se pueden hazer y no conviene que se hagan por intérpretes."*[347] Eventually, the Jesuits were forced to acknowledge that they were unable to meet this goal, as they could not refute criticism from rival Brahmins that interpreters were being used in the confessional and that the language barrier was hampering conversion efforts.[348]

Thus, whilst they were eager to boast in their internal correspondence of some members' progress in learning local languages and how they could dispense with

346 cf. Boxer, C.R., *The Christian Century in Japan, 1649-50*, Carcanet 1993.

347 Wicki, J. (ed.) *Documenta Indica*, vol. X, p.247. Our translation: "The best way to help Christians is through friendly chats and confessions, which cannot and should not be done through interpreters."

348 cf. Borges, Charles J. *Foreign Jesuits and Native Resistance in Goa 1542-1759* in de Souza, T. ed. *Essays in Goan History* Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi 1989.

interpreters, the Jesuits in fact had constant recourse to them. The gifted linguist Father Henrique Henriques wrote several works of catechism in Tamil; produced the first Portuguese-Tamil bilingual dictionary and believed that by understanding the basics of grammar one could learn any tongue: *"Sem eu saber a lingoa de Badegá, tentey tirar algumas declinações e conjugações da mesma lingoa e estaa a cousa quasi tirada, o que se tirou em bem poucos dias e o principal pera se quá aprender qualquer lingoa são as declinações e conjugações."*[349] Yet, he surely miscalculated the abilities of his fellow brethren when he over-optimistically and repeatedly declared in his correspondence that they would only need a few months before they could hear confession in the local language. One of his fellow brethren, Martin Equsquiza, completely disagreed and vented his frustration at the Jesuits' poor command of the local tongue:

> *"los portugueses son açúcar en comparación de la gente de la tierra, que tanto trabajo ay en confessarla, porque no entienden la lengua portuguesa en semejantes cosas, ni los portugueses entienden la suya, sino con difficultad, hablándoles por infinitivos y gerundivos y a la cafresca, ansý en las confessiones como en declar(ar)les las cosas de su salvación."* [350]

Henriques' view was not shared either by Father Gomes Vaz, who writing in Goa as late as 1578, some thirty five years after the Jesuits' arrival in India: *"Las confesiones son muchas y con provecho notable, y la falta de obreros que sepan la lengua, son causa de no poderse cumplir con todos."*[351] He lamented that the perennial shortage of

349 DI, vol. V, p. 682. Letter from Henrique Henriques, Mannar, December 1562. Our translation: "Without any knowledge of the language of Badegá (Telugu), I tried to take down some declinations and conjugations and have nearly completed them within the space of just a few days. The declinations and conjugations are the most important for learning any of these languages."

350 DI, vol. VII, p.111. Letter from Pe. Martin Egusquiza, Daman 1566. Our translation: "The Portuguese are like sugar compared to the locals, who are very difficult to confess, because they don't understand Portuguese in these matters, and the Portuguese only understand their language with great difficulty, talking to them in infintives and gerunds and in pidgin, both in the confessional and when proclaiming things for their salvation."

351 Wicki, J. (ed.) *Documenta Indica, vol. XI,* p. 291. Our translation: "There are many confessions

gifted linguists, which the Portuguese administration itself also faced, was preventing the Society from fulfilling its mission in its entirety. Moreover, attaining the requisite level of fluency to be able to preach in the local language was another matter entirely and even Valignano, a staunch advocate of language learning, was resigned to having to resort to using interpreters:

> *"L'altro rimedio é il procurare di crear molti di questi fanciulli della terra che apparino bene la lingua portuesa et si introiscono a servir per interpreti et ancora, quelli che saranno capaci, farli studiare per sacerdoti, perché ancorché gli nostri apparino la lingua, tuttavia pochi saranno quelli che l'apprendino in modo che possino securamente predicare, et per ciò sempre saranno necesarii gli interpreti.*"[352]

As we can see from Valignano's proposal, the Jesuits cannot be blamed for not trying to tackle the issue. Unlike the State, which basically relied on Providence to furnish it with linguistic mediators, the Society of Jesus created the first interpreter training school in Portuguese territory, at the College of Saint Paul in Goa.[353] The origins and efficacy of this establishment will be discussed in the next chapter, for the time being, what is of interest is the fact that the Jesuits sought to become autonomous in interpreters, for various reasons. It goes without saying that they had to be selective; unlike merchants or even the Portuguese state, it was unthinkable for them to associate with the highly unsuitable renegades or deportees, nor Moors who had once lived in the Iberian peninsula. Hence, they could not avail themselves of the "born" or "ready-

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which yield excellent results, and the lack of workers who know the language is the reason why we cannot attend to them all."

352 Wicki, J. (ed.) *Documenta Indica, vol. X* p.247. Our translation: "The other solution is to raise many of the local children to learn Portuguese well and have them start by serving as interpreters, and in addition, those that seem capable can study to become priests, because even if ours learn the language, there will never be enough of them to be able to preach at ease, and that is why we will always need interpreters."

353 The College was founded by the Franciscan, Diogo de Borba and Miguel Vaz in 1541, but was taken over by the Jesuits in 1547.

made" interpreters who had lived in multiple linguistic and cultural environments; possessed the so drastically lacking linguistic skills and who could be drafted in at a moment's notice.

They were thus obliged to recruit their interpreters from among the quickly developing community of Luso-Asians, but they too held a number of drawbacks. Their level of language skills varied considerably (see Francis Xavier's complaint above); they were poorly educated if at all, and as all too often they were lapsed Christians, not only could they set the wrong example to the congregations that the Society aimed to conquer, but they also had a great deal of difficulty in mastering the liturgical language. In addition, the Society had to remunerate these *topazes* which represented a financial burden when monetary resources were limited. Thus, austerity was another incentive for the Jesuits to nurture their own linguists.

Jesuit correspondence reveals that the brethren were much more attentive to the quality of linguistic mediation than other users in sixteenth-century India and that explains why they attached importance to appropriate preparation and training. This is hardly surprising, since the power of the word rather than that of the sword was the only weapon they had to conquer local populations. Furthermore, the priests had a much higher level of education and culture than the vast majority of those engaged in Portugal's commercial and military ventures. They, therefore, frequently vented their frustration at the difficulties encountered in translation and interpreting, for there was no direct correspondence in Indian languages for key Catholic concepts:

> *"E não se gastou pouco tempo em concertar as orações, porque as que dantes erão tiradas tinhão* mentiras*, por falta que os topazes, digo interpretes não souberão bem tirá-las. 3 ou 4 meses andey em as tirar, e hé hum gram trabalho, porque lhe faltão palavras nesta lingoa que sejão como as nosas."* [354]

354 DI, vol. I, p.583. Letter from Father Henrique Henriques to Ignatio de Loyola, Punicale, 21.11.1549. Our translation: "And we wasted considerable time in correcting the prayers, because the existing texts contained mistakes, as the topazes, I mean interpreters, did not know how to write them. I spent 3 or 4 months copying them, and it was a great deal of work, because they haven't got the same

Equally, when engaged in theological debate in the Moghul court of Akbar, the two interpreters who had been working for the Jesuit delegation let them down through not being able to find appropriate equivalences in Persian (and we must not forget that the other delegations were unlikely to have needed interpreters, thereby putting the Christians at a disadvantage). Thus the Emperor sent to Goa for a good interpreter who he was likely to pay whatever he asked:

> *"Tutto il studio del re era farsi esplicare li misterii della nostra santa fede, ma che non li poteve bene entendere, perché non vi era interprete che sapesse ritrovare vocabuli persi per explicare il misterio della incarnatione né il misterio della Trinità del che stava il re molto malencollico e si risolse di mandare questo portoghese qua a Goa acciò li cercasse una bona limgua persa, e li disse che li prometesse e che spendesse quanto fosse necessario, purchè non tornasse senza interprete bono."*[355]

Many interpreters did not merely lack the vocabulary in Oriental languages, but were also unable to grasp the concepts at stake, preventing the message from being properly conveyed. The priests became aware of this and came to realise that this shortcoming stemmed from their lack of theological knowledge, in itself somewhat predictable when the interpreters they used were barely in their teens. Another interesting aspect to consider are their public-speaking skills: the context in which the interpreters worked for the religious orders was far removed from that of the fortress; port or customs-house. Firstly, the interaction was not a negotiation with each side trying to pressure the other into yielding to their interests, but rather one of persuasion

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words in this language as in ours."

355 DI, vol. XII, p.91. Letter from Francisco Pasio to Claudio Acquaviva, Praep. Prov. Romanae, Goa, 13.10.1580. Our translation: "The King's entire study had aim of understanding the mysteries of our faith, but he could not understand them well, as there wasn't an interpreter who could find words in Persian to explain the Incarnation nor the mystery of the Holy Trinity, which greatly saddened the King. He decided to send this Portuguese man here to Goa to find a good Persian interpreter and told him and had him promise to spare no expense, so as not to return without a good interpreter."

and attraction**.** Commercial or even peace negotiations would presumably have comprised a dialogue with short interventions on each side; a limited number of participants in close physical proximity, in which the ultimate bargaining position (agreement versus disagreement, offer versus counter-offer) was the central element to convey.

Conversely, in a sermon or theological discussion, which appear to have been the areas in which Jesuits felt the greatest frustration, interventions would have been longer and from one participant only, with the interpreter during this period working almost exclusively in one direction, that is to say into his native tongue (probably in short segments but over a sustained period of time); he would have been trying to bridge an enormous cultural gap, in that he would be converting a message delivered by an erudite man, an expert in his field, into language that could be understood by illiterate peasants from another continent who had never had any meaningful prior contact with the subject matter nor with the speaker's world. Thus, the words not only had to be translated but also (when the preacher was not deliberately speaking in a lower register) adapted into a form and a message that was accessible to the audience. To throw another spanner in the works, these interpreters would be working out in the open air, for a large; diverse, noisy and perhaps awkward, even slightly hostile, audience. As a result, we should be more surprised by their successes rather than their failures, for the Jesuits were asking a tall order of them, but their delivery was a key component of their clients' and employers' appraisal, as can be seen from the following examples.

The Moghul Emperor Akbar would personally clean up the interpreters' work, so to speak, to make it more comprehensible, even elegant, for the audience: *"E nas disputas elle [Akbar] hé nosso lingoa, repetindo o que dizem os nossos lingoas que são fracos com milhor modo."*[356] Francis Xavier similarly urged Mateus, his companion, Francisco Manilhas' interpreter, to also concentrate on speaking up: "*Dizei a Mateus que seja bom filho, e que eu lhe serei bom pai. Olhai muito por ele e dizei-[lhe] que aos domingos*

356 DI, vol. XII, p.40 Letter from pp. Rodolfo Acquaviva to Provincial, 13.7.1580. Our translation: "And in the arguments, he [Akbar] is our interpreter, repeating what our weak interpreters say in a better way."

fale alto o que vós lhe disserdes: que o ouçam todos, e que também estando em Manapar o ouçam!"[357] Mateus appears to have been an above-average interpreter, for Francis Xavier was clearly fond of him and eager to retain his services for the Society, but others clearly did not live up to the religious orders' expectations in public-speaking, leading the priests to also learn their sermons by heart in the local language so that they could deliver them with the appropriate fervour, even if their ability to subsequently engage in dialogue was minimal: *"O que sobretudo acrecentou a festa foi uma pratica que lhes fez o Pe. Pero d'Almeida com muito fervor e facilidade no falar da lingoa. No cabo dela lhes perguntou, pola lingoa (o que se custuma perguntar), se queriam ser christãos."*[358]

Whether or not such methods were more effective is a question that is certainly open to debate, for, as we have already suspected, the Jesuits' appraisal of their capability in Oriental languages was not unbiased. During their progress towards fluency, they may have inflicted some rather tedious ordeals on their audiences, as the following passage unintentionally suggests:

> *"O Irmão Valadares há perto de nova mezes que está na Costa, os outros dous Irmãos haa já mais; aprendem bem a linguoa. Podem em muytas cousas escusar topás, ao menos o Irmão Bairros, e pella bondade de Deus jaa se atreve a fazer praticas sem topaz, porem com ajuda de outro que entende bem o que elle falla em malavar, e depois de o Irmão o dizer, torna o tal a milhor e declarar à gente: e este modo de falar tive eu alguns mezes nos*

357 Letter from Francis Xavier to Francisco Manilhas in Punicale, sent from Manapar, 20.3.1544 in *Obras Completas,* p. 154. Our translation: Tell Mateus to be a good son and I will be a good father to him. Take good care of him and tell him to say out loud what you tell him on Sundays: let everyone hear him, including those in Manapar!" This last part was a jest as Manapar was a good twenty miles away.

358 DI, Vol. VIII, p. 328. Our translation: "Above all, what really got the party going was a sermon from Father Pero d'Almeida, with such fervour and ease in the language. When he finished he asked them, through the interpreter (what one normally asks) if they wanted to be Christians."

principios antes de saber bem a linguoa."[359]

Over the course of time, in view of the barriers that the Jesuits faced in learning languages and the shortage of serviceable interpreters, the Society had to look for other strategies to facilitate communication with their flocks. As already mentioned, the College of St. Paul was to become a training school for interpreters, but this was certainly not its original vocation. The initial intention was to educate local boys so that they could join the clergy, thereby killing two birds with one stone: a strategy to overcome both the acute shortage of priests and linguists. Moreover, the incorporation of local clergy became imperative in the mid-seventeenth century when Pope Alexander VII outlawed the use of interpreters in confessions, on theological grounds, in his *Sacrossanti Apostulatus,*[360] and allowing the Jesuits to use the Chinese language in services in China.

The religious orders' and in particular, the Jesuits' prevalent area of activity was of course to evangelise, but from 1560 onwards, this was not the only way in which the Catholic Church came into contact with the local population of Goa. The establishment of the Inquisition created a new field in which cultural and linguistic mediation was required, with obviously disparate communication settings to those of missionary work. The Inquisition persecuted Hindus, Moslems, Jews, New Christians, who continued to practise their old faith and all remaining lapsed converts, many of whom did not of course speak Portuguese. The Holy Office turned to *Naiks (Portuguese: naiques),* member of the militias or guards, to assist them as intermediaries in questioning, but

359 DI, vol. IV, p.26. Our translation: "Brother Valadares has been on this coast for close to nine months, the other two brothers for longer; they are learning the language well. For many things, they can do without an interpreter, at least Brother Bairros can, and through the Grace of God he already ventures to deliver sermons without an interpreter, albeit with the help of another who understands well what he says in Malabar (Tamil), and after the Brother has said it, declares an improved version of it to the people: and I also used this way of speaking for some months at the start before I knew the language well."

360 cf. Faria, Patrícia Souza de *A Conversão das Almas do Oriente – Poder e Catolicismo em Goa: Séculos XVI e XVII.* Doctoral Thesis in History submitted to Universidade Federal Fluminense in 2008, accessed at www.historia.uff.br/stricto/teses/Tese-2008_FARIA_Patricia_Souza_de-S.pdf on 8 May 2014.

also in receiving accusations:

> *"Como a maior parte dos presos contra os quais em grande número se procede a dita Inquisição são Mouros e Gentios de várias seitas, línguas e nações, e que os Naiques que se elegem para o dito effeito são peritos nellas, ficão sendo precisamente necessários ao Santo Ofício para serviços de intérpretes, e sem elles he impossível o processar-se e expedirem-se as causas, tomar denunciações e perguntar testemunhas."*[361]

Interpreters were thus instrumental in enabling the Inquisition to conduct its persecution in India and the use of locals to perform this role must surely have created a certain animosity towards them from their compatriots. One can also only speculate as to the impact that Jesuit involvement with the Inquisition had on missionary work. As their language policy of learning local tongues was exactly the opposite of the Inquisition's, their knowledge of Konkani[362], for instance, was of interest and thus they too could be drafted in as interpreters, until finally around the 1680's, the former's language policy was imposed, with the suppression of Konkani, the exclusive use of Portuguese and therefore, the elimination of the need for linguistic mediators.

What emerges from a study of Jesuit activities in the East at that time is that, as in all other fields of Portuguese expansion, the political; economic and religious domains of interpreting unsurprisingly became intertwined, in India, China and Japan. After all, one of the underlying notions behind the conversion efforts sponsored by the Portuguese Crown was that coreligionaries would be more conducive to supporting Portugal's commercial and territorial interests.[363] It should not be forgotten that the State actually

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361 BNRJ, 25,1,2005 n.215 apud. Faria, op. cit. p. 137. Our translation: "As the majority of the large number of prisoners facing charges from the said Inquisition are Moslems or pagans from different religions; languages, and nations, and the Naiks elected for that purpose are experts in them, they are absolutely necessary for providing interpreting services to the Holy Office, and without them it is impossible to conduct proceedings, hear accusations and interrogate witnesses."

362 Konkani: the language spoken in Goa.

363 cf. Ahmad, Afzal *Indo-Portuguese Diplomacy during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*

made provisions to support religious orders (although not always carried out) including the remuneration of interpreters, who worked either in specific parishes and for the peripatetic missionaries: *"V. S. mandou o anno passado hum allvará ao Capitão Ayres de Ffygueiredo, no quall lhe mamdava que desse dinheiro aos Padres pera comprarem cada hum seu topaz, e mais seu ordenado pera seu sostentamento."*[364]

Thus, the incipient *Estado da Índia* soon appropriated Jesuits and indeed members of other religious orders, who were willing participants, and their local interpreters where necessary, to conduct official embassies to various local leaders. Afzal astutely identifies the reasoning for charging priests with diplomatic missions, with two of the salient points being linked to language, namely that they had learned the language of the Court they would visit and that they were the most articulate among the Portuguese in the East.[365] They therefore combined a suitable profile, that of trusted men of the cloth whose religious fidelity was unquestionable, with the skills of an interpreter and public-speaker, the so-called *embaixador-lingoa* (also found in other parts of the Empire, such as North Africa).

Some priests would actually remain for considerable periods of time at the various Courts of the East, as we have seen with Acquaviva at the Moghul Emperor Akbar's court and even the Chinese Imperial court (although in this case, there were Belgians, French and other nationalities in addition to the Portuguese and their activities were by and large unrelated to the *Estado da Índia)* and where they would actually become spiritual; scientific and political advisors to the rulers. On occasions, their moral standing and linguistic skills would also be put to use as representatives of these monarchs in their embassies to the Portuguese administration.[366] This adds a certain twist to the tale, for it raises the issue of their allegiance. The priests in this situation had

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Originals, Delhi 2008, pp 52-53

364 DI, vol. I, p.168. Letter from Father Nicolau Lancellotti to Dom João de Castro, Governor of India, Goa, 1.2.1547. Our translation: "Excellency, last year, you sent an authorisation to Captain Ayres de Figueiredo, instructing him to give money to the priests for each to buy his own interpreter, and to pay them an income for their subsistence."

365 Afzal, op. cit., pp. 58-9

366 Ibid., p.60

spent months or even years toiling to convert and then maintain the Christian faith of local rulers and would thus seek to defend their petitions to the Portuguese to avoid undermining their evangelising efforts, without upsetting their compatriots. They were pulled close to the divide, the no-man's land, where as intermediaries between Europeans and Asians, they would have to strike a delicate balance and one that would preserve their ultimate allegiance to God. We can therefore conclude that they would have pursued their religious objectives in brokering consensus between the two powers.

Several examples come from Indochina, where priests occupied important diplomatic positions within those states and so were logical choices for ambassadors. Flores informs us, though, that the Dominican friars sent in 1596 by the Siamese king, Naresuan, to appeal to the Portuguese for help, Brothers Jorge da Mota and Luís da Fonseca were not entirely transparent. They vastly exaggerated the country's commercial potential to the Captain of Malacca, such as there being cheap precious stones available in Siam, in order to entice him into re-establishing ties, the motive being that a stronger Portuguese presence would also boost their mission.[367]

In Japan, the interests of the Portuguese Crown and those of the Church were closely correlated. The *Estado da Índia* did not gain a strong territorial foothold as such in Japan, but enjoyed a monopoly of the trade route from Macao, from the 1550's onwards. Thanks to their knowledge of the language, the Jesuits quickly became indispensable intermediaries in trade negotiations that took place upon the arrival of the "great ship" in Nagasaki each year. Once again, their moral standing as men of the cloth earned them the trust of both parties. In fact, this role of business interpreters; their discreet presence, and adaptation to local customs enabled the Jesuits to remain in Japan and to prosetylise for approximately one century, whilst the Japanese were a good deal less tolerant of other religious orders, notably the Dominicans and Franciscans.

Jesuit interpreters also played a prominent role in the order's embassies to the Japanese warlords, Hideyoshi and Ieyasu. Two Portuguese brothers, João Rodrigues and

367 cf. Flores, Maria da Conceição *Os Portugueses e o Sião no Século XVI* Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, 2002, p.66.

Ambrosio Fernandes, accompanied Valignano to the former's Court in Miyako in 1591. Hideyoshi took a clear liking to Rodrigues and summoned him to talk privately to him and question him. Rodrigues went on to become an eminent figure among the Jesuits, frequently acting as their Imperial Ambassador and ultimately being appointed Ieyasu's personal commercial agent, dealing with the Portuguese ship and brokering price agreements with the merchants.[368] Whilst highly valued by both the Portuguese and Japanese, Rodrigues was deeply unpopular with other European powers attempting to establish commercial relations with the Japanese, as they were reliant on him for contacting Ieyasu and accused him of always favouring Portuguese interests. Ultimately, he had a falling-out with Ieyasu, was expelled from Japan and Portugal lost its trade monopoly. Again, one can only speculate as to how matters might have been different had the Portuguese state trained its own interpreters rather than having to rely on members of religious orders, for it is clear that in this case, the primary Japanese interest, post-Hideyoshi, lay in trade and not in converting to Christianity. For the Jesuits, being able to act as interpreters between two such distant languages, allowed them to wield considerable power.

In China, however, in the following century, this position of power and the ambiguity of their loyalties actually made the Jesuits somewhat inconvenient to Portugal's diplomatic concerns, as becomes clear from Alexandre Metelo de Sousa e Meneses' account of his embassy to the Chinese Imperial Court from 1725 to 1728. The Jesuits had been facing severe persecution from the Chinese authorities and urged the Ambassador to broach the subject of religious freedom with the Emperor. He knew it to be a delicate subject and one which was not necessarily in Portugal's interest, as many of the Jesuits in China were not Portuguese and the evangelising fervour of Portugal's Discoveries had long since faded. Hence, he scuppered the Jesuits' hopes of using their position as interpreters to sway the subject of discussion, choosing to dispense with them (the interpreters, Father Marim, a Frenchman and Father André Peruza, a Portuguese), clear the room of any other Jesuits and then use the interpreter he had hired

368 cf. Cooper, Michael J. *Rodrigues the Interpreter, An Early Jesuit in Japan and China* Weatherhill, Tokyo, 1974.

in Macau to speak directly to the Chamberlain.[369]. Paiva suggests that the very rigorous rules of protocol in force at the Chinese court and the delicate balance that underpinned Macao's statute made it absolutely vital that henceforth the Portuguese administration in Macao train interpreters to avoid the risks of using Jesuits or Chinese Malays as their linguistic intermediaries, which had in fact been a spoke in the wheel of their relations ever since the first embassy of Tomé Pires.[370]

This brief incursion into the various situations in which members of religious orders intervened as interpreters and emissaries in the *Estado da Índia* reveals the complex web of relations between the Portuguese and local authorities and how the Jesuit linguists in particular were involved in all domains of the Portuguese expansion and not merely in spreading the Christian faith.

369 cf. Brasão, Eduardo *Relações Externas de Portugal: Reinado de Dom João V*, Livraria Civilização, Porto 1938.

370 cf. Paiva, Maria Manuel Gomes *Encontros e Desencontros da Coexistência*, Livros do Oriente, 2004.

CHAPTER FIVE

ASSESSMENT AND TRAINING

5.1 THE QUALITY OF INTERPRETING AND INTERPRETERS

In the previous chapter, we described and analysed the different contexts in which interpreting occurred during the Portuguese discoveries and how the actual act of interpreting varied accordingly, whilst at the same time, how the need for linguistic mediation influenced the way in which such events unfolded. In this the last chapter of our study, we shall strive to grasp the impact that interpreting had on the undertakings of political; military and religious entities in the East, and in order to do so, we shall focus on the level and kind of attention that it was paid by those who were directly involved in its performance. At first glance, one could seemingly defend that the importance and relevance of this activity can simply be gauged by the number of references to it in accounts of interpreter-mediated acts. The fact that a considerable proportion of such references provide us with no description; detail, or comment, but are mere observations of its existence could be construed as discrediting this hypothesis. For many of our sources, interpreters were supporting cast with no lines of their own, or contrarily, were so much an integral part of proceedings that they did not warrant any specific mention. Therefore, assessments of or evidence on the quality and the greater the attention paid to the preparation and training of interpreters would, in our opinion, constitute more satisfactory indicators for our study.

Measuring the quality of interpreting performance, however, is a highly polemical issue and one which has generated a prolonged and widespread debate among researchers and practitioners, concerning among other things who should evaluate interpreters and on what basis. Given this methodological ambiguity, trying to assess the quality of interpreting performed some five or nearly six hundred years ago would

appear to be a thankless endeavour. There are no samples of interpreting or pre-defined parameters for assessment, but the numerous first and second-hand accounts of interpreter-mediated situations can provide us with the premises for user evaluation, considered by scholars such as Ingrid Kurz to be a highly relevant perspective, whilst at the same time, through taking up Baigorri and Foz's suggestions to build our own historiography. The majority of what we can consider significant first-hand accounts by users of interpreting in this place and period are to be found in Jesuit correspondence, for they frequently assess the quality of interpreter performance. By comparison, contemporary chronicles abound in brief references to interpreter activity and also include a significant number of descriptions of it, to the point of setting out the contents of the messages which they were requested to convey and the results of their efforts, which enables us to draw our own conclusions concerning their degree of success, based primarily on the results achieved in terms of substantive objectives and communication, but rarely with anything than mere inferences concerning the technical quality of the interpreting. Nevertheless, we must not ignore our subjectivity, namely the differences between our own basis for assessment and that of the inhabitants of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Before getting into details, however, we need to address our own methodological issues and set out some parameters. We need to think about who the various categories of assessor were during the period of the Discoveries, in terms of their qualifications for so doing; what their relationship was to the interpreter and the interpreted act, and what bias this might imply in their judgement and, additionally, when the assessment is made by a user, how expectations would have differed in the various settings in which interpreter-mediated acts took place. We have already characterised the various kinds of interpreter-mediated acts and when forming our own judgements, we should also attempt to include in our analysis what interpreting skills they required so that we can the gauge the subjectivity or not of contemporary (“direct”) assessors, before adding our opinions.

Nowadays, there is a tendency to divide up the judges of interpreting performance into three main categories: “experts” taken from the ranks of seasoned interpreters and teachers of interpretation who know both the source and target languages and who

assess performance at examinations under relatively controlled conditions; users who evaluate interpreting in a natural setting (but often at "experts'" request and according to a structured format) and researchers who measure interpreting quality in a laboratory environment.[371] These scenarios would appear to be far removed from interpreter-mediated acts during the Discoveries, but they help us understand that contemporary sources contain a very open-ended evaluation from users, that those users are in themselves a heterogeneous group, and that our perspective is that of the "false expert", expert in the sense of understanding the cognitive mechanisms and constraints of interpreting, but "false" in the sense that we have never experienced anything even similar to the contexts in which our predecessors worked. If one considers that various studies on the perception of quality in modern conference interpreting reveal significant differences in responses between the various respondent groups,[372] then one can only expect a even wider gap between our expectations and those that we will find in sixteenth century sources.

5.1.1 Interpreting performance in expedition diaries and contemporary chronicles

We have, thus far, essentially referred to several first-hand narratives of voyages around the coasts of Africa, inevitably written by seafarers. Generally speaking, they were entirely dependent on their linguistic mediators for communication, as they, like the rest of the crew, knew only their own language in the dialogue (Portuguese) and not a word of their interlocutors' (which at once distinguishes them from "experts"); they were two-way users of interpreting, in that they both provided input messages and received output messages, on the basis of which they had to make important even life-or-death decisions. Their interpreters were often slaves or deportees, whom they considered as their social inferiors and whose individual characteristics and qualities

371 cf. Moser-Mercer, Barbara *Quality in interpreting: some methodological issues*, in The Interpreters' Newsletter no. 7/1996, Trieste, Edizioni LINT, 1996, pp. 43-55

372 Kurz, Ingrid Conference Interpreting: *Quality in the Ears of the User* in Meta : journal des traducteurs / Meta: Translators' Journal, vol. 46, n° 2, 2001, p. 394-409. Accessed at http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/003364ar on 16 May 2014.

thus went unnoticed or at least unrecorded. Consequently, their main parameter for assessment was not interpreting quality (however we understand it), but rather the results obtained through the medium of interpretation, in a rather black-white evaluation. Either the interpretation was effective and the objective attained or it was not. And in these cases, when we refer to objective, we are not referring to communication objectives, such as the faithful transposition of a dialogue enabling clear understanding by both parties, but rather the issuer or expedition's substantive objectives, such as being able to trade wares or obtaining information about the country's natural resources.

What is striking is that breakdowns in communication are never explicitly blamed on interpreter shortcomings; our informants merely attributed them to their interpreters being faced with an unknown language and thus an impossible task. Therein lies a curious paradox in fact: the native West African interpreters claimed not to understand other languages within the same geographical region, the coast of Guinea, whilst Martim Afonso through his stay in *Manicongo* and another sailor who had been to the Western side of Africa were able to mediate with the people in modern-day Mozambique, which is geographically and presumably linguistically far more removed. Therefore, one might just wish to play devil's advocate at this point: the Portuguese had no means of knowing whether they were being told the truth. They could not distinguish between different African languages, nor could they be sure if a new language could at least in part be understood by the interpreter or not[373], not forgetting of course that many of them had been forced into this situation, so could have been intentionally obstructive, as Albuquerque has suggested.[374] Moreover, the Portuguese were highly suspicious of deliberate mistranslation performed either through religious or cultural animosity, or for the interpreter's personal agenda (in particular to make a financial gain or obtain some sort of power or privilege).

Such specific references though are rare and even when there are observations

373 And by this we infer that interpreters could claim not to understand when they did or indeed to understand a language, when they were in fact just clutching at straws.

374 Albuquerque, Luis de "Os primeiros contactos com os povos da Guiné" in *Portugal e o Mundo* (dir. Luis de Albuquerque), Publicações Alfa, 1989, vol. II, p. 82

about an interpreter's performance, they tend to refer to associated activities, those that we have identified as being the activities of a *lingua*, such as providing information; promoting Portuguese interests, or spying, rather than linguistic mediation *per se*, as we can see from the following example taken from *Lendas da Índia*:

> *"o outro recolheo o Gouernador pera seu serviço, que o achou homem de muyta verdade, e que sabia muytas lingoas, e muy sabido em todalas cousas, e muy verdadeiro, com que era muyto do conselho do Gouernador, que se chamaua Çufo, que depois em se fazendo a fortaleza d'Ormuz se fez christão, e se chamou Alexandre d'Atayde."*[375]

When there are references to interpreting proficiency, it is more common for the chroniclers to comment on an interpreter's talents in general rather than their performance in a particular situation, although even these opinions cannot be taken at face value for they are often strongly influenced by the interpreter's self-assessment or other factors which do not reflect the quality of the interpreting act itself, namely the perceived fluency in the foreign language, which was not heard directly by the chronicler nor was it understood by the original assessor. Moreover, expectations of interpreter competence varied a great deal: in some instances, particularly during the Voyages of Discovery, the mere ability to establish communication was considered a victory, for otherwise the progress of the Portuguese would be delayed by the language barrier. Basic competence in a foreign language backed up by hand gestures would have been enough for the communication objectives to be achieved and for the mediator to have successfully played his role. At the other extreme, the Jesuits would expect effective transposition of complex spiritual notions into Oriental languages, which they themselves recognised as lacking such terminology and that the interpreter succeed in convincing the audience to take up the Christian faith, which as we have previously

375 LI, vol. II, p.134. Our translation: "The Governor took the other one into his service, because he considered him to be very truthful , and because he knew many languages, and was well-versed in all affairs, and of great integrity, which meant that he we a close advisor of the Governor, he was called Çufo, who when the fortress at Hormuz was being built became a Christian and took the name Alexandre d'Athayde."

explained, they would naturally be reluctant to do, for it meant relinquishing part of their cultural identity and accepting that of the more powerful group. In between, we have numerous references to the perceived loyalty of interpreters, principally their ideological loyalty to the Portuguese but also fidelity to the task that was required of them. These are the references, which we shall now examine in greater detail, with a view to constructing a framework on which interpreter assessment can be hung, out of a myriad of heterogeneous observations.

We have already mentioned that early Portuguese exploration along the West African coast was marked by two phases, one aimed at gathering information and taking slaves with confrontational contact with native peoples, followed by a more conciliatory approach which gave precedence to dialogue and fostering trading partnerships. Unsurprisingly, interpreters' contribution in the first phase was naturally limited, in fact, one can argue that the lack of suitable linguists fostered the Portuguese option to attack, for they had no means of pursuing their quest for information, as previously suggested in reference to Zurara's *Crónica da Guiné.* It is only rarely commented on in the second phase, although Cadamosto, rather more sensitive to the issues of language, indirectly provides us with some insight into interpreter performance by linking it to the attainment of the overall objectives of the expedition, sometimes not achieved, either because the natives were too hostile[376] or because they reached a point where the interpreters could not understand a new language (or so they claimed). On others, they met with greater success:

> *"O turgimão, foi com o dito negro. Em pouco tempo, encontrou-se com o dito senhor, e de lá não partiu que ele não mandasse certos negros seus à caravela, e dali não partimos que não sòmente houvéssemos a sua boa amizade, como também lhe vendêseemos muitas coisas"*[377]

376 Cf. Cadamosto, op. cit. p.155.

377 Cadamosto, op. cit.p. 163: Our translation: "The interpreter went with the black man to his Lord, to whom he told so much about us, that the latter immediately wanted to send some of his blacks to our caravels, with whom not only did we make friendship, but we also traded a lot of our cargo."

A similar perspective is obtained from reading Gomes de Sintra's travelogue, in which he refers to one unsuccessful contact, frustrated by the communication barrier: *"Os cristãos faziam-lhes sinais de paz, mas eles não entenderam. Mandaram-lhes os cristãos mercadorias que tinham trazido com eles a terra, mas eles receberam-na sem se disporem a falar."*[378] followed by a more auspicious exchange: *"Falaram os cristãos com essa gente através dos homens que traziam consigo e fizeram paz com eles, trocaram as suas mercadorias e trouxeram daí muitos negros comprados."*[379]

As the most enlightened of our principal sources on such voyages, Cadamosto's views reveal a certain tolerance in the face of communication problems, albeit mentioning his annoyance when understanding proves beyond their reach, but this somewhat resigned attitude is perhaps best explained by his necessarily low expectations. He refers to locals being taken back to Portugal where they can be questioned about their homeland by the many black *interpreters* there. It is clear, though, that he considers any African who can communicate in Portuguese to be an interpreter, as the example he gives is of a slave woman from a remote land (who if we recall was unable to make any real sense of the man she interpreted). We can, therefore, deduce, that the so-called *turgimões* who he (and others like him) embarked on their voyages were selected from the same ranks and hence the high failure rate in establishing communication could in fact stem from their limited abilities and aptitude. We can see the beginnings of a vicious circle, with poor selection leading to weak performance and an acceptance of communication difficulties. Consequently, when interpreters with appropriate language and analytical skills were found, they won enormous admiration from the Portuguese.

Similarly poor selection occurred on the voyages of exploration to Asia: *linguas* sent ashore often had only a rudimentary understanding of the other language, whilst

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378 Gomes de Sintra, Diogo op. cit., p.63. Our translation: "The Christians made signs of peace to them, but they did not understand. The Christians sent the wares they had brought with them ashore, but they just took them without wishing to talk."

379 Ibid, p.63. Our translation: "The Christians spoke to these people through the men they had brought with them and made peace with them, they exchanged merchandise and brought away many blacks they had bought."

others who offered their services to the Portuguese and which were gratefully accepted did not respect the fundamental value of neutrality, as Bontaibo himself reveals:

> *"E como eu são de todos conhecido, e sabem que são das partes da Christandade, como muytas vezes lhe tenha contado, pareceolhe que eu melhor que ninguem vos poderia enganar e trayr, me prometem grandes dadiuas pera que fingidamente me meta em vossa amizade pera saber de vossos segredos, e lhe der auiso de tudo."*[380]

Gaspar da Gama was similarly a spy sent by a local leader, with a view to planning a surprise attack on Vasco da Gama's fleet. The Portuguese certainly did not help themselves, though, by pursuing a policy of using convicted criminals as bridge-builders, who were hardly the most likely to be models of integrity. The fact that early on in their Asian experiences, the Portuguese encountered such treacherous interpreters only served to reinforce their engrained mistrust of them. Henceforth, trustworthiness became an all-important criterion in interpreter assessment made by users and reflected in contemporary accounts. Thus, first-hand judgements of interpreters combined technical skills and personal qualities, albeit far removed from our own parameters today. As far as vocational competence is concerned, evaluations were generally based on fluency in the foreign language, although the judges had no personal understanding of it and so would have merely deduced the level of proficiency from the speed or the authority with which the interpreter spoke, whilst we have come to realise that a touch of bravado was an essential weapon in any interpreter's armoury. Personal qualities as mentioned previously were understood to be loyalty; siding with the Portuguese and observing the Portuguese empire's social values: being a devout Christian; despising other religions; courage and sharp wits, and being suitably polite.

Other skills, not directly linked to the activity of transposing messages from one

380 LI, vol. I, p.78. Our translation: "And as I am known by all, and they know that I come from the Christian lands, as I have often told him, he thought that I better than anyone could deceive and betray you, they promise me huge gifts to trick my way into your friendship and know your secrets, and then warn him of everything."

language to another were highly valued in the nascent empire, such as contributing to the achievement of political and economic objectives, through negotiating or diplomatic skills coupled with or prevailing over linguistic prowess, and indeed it was often these abilities that created the reputation of certain linguists. Yet, they were of course a considerable improvement in many respects on the chancers, who in the words of Bouchon emerged from the crowd for a few moments to try their luck at interpreting, normally for their own ends, to just as quickly disappear once they had completed this one-off service. Impossible to hold accountable for what they had said and prime suspects for laying traps in this context of intrigue and treachery.

We can therefore compose a profile of the interpreters working with greater continuity for the Portuguese in India on the basis of knowledge and fluency in local languages and certain qualities. Alexandre d'Athayde, in addition to being credited with fluency in many tongues (although likely to be true given his career on trading vessels in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, this information probably originated in one of his friend's, Francisco d'Albuquerque's, rather narcissistic letters[381]), is singled out by Brás d'Albuquerque as being a fine businessman *"grande homem de negócio"* and for connivance in the murder of the King of Hormuz's brother,[382] although as mentioned before, despite frequently being given the epithet *lingoa* he is rarely mentioned as translating himself, but rather acts as the Governor's advisor. For his part, Gaspar Correia heaps praise on Gaspar Rodrigues, fluent in all languages *"que bem sabia todas as linguas";* is courteous and respectful, and proves his diplomatic skills when negotiating the tributary treaty with the King of Hormuz.[383] Similarly, as discussed in a previous chapter, João Machado was made into a hero, for his being a repentant renegade and the fine qualities he displayed, yet the skeletons in his cupboard are largely glossed over: Castanheda acritically refers to his having drowned the two children he had with a Moslem woman before returning to the Portuguese fold to prevent them from being forcibly converted to Islam, an act which we find utterly reprehensible. One might, therefore, add, that beyond the difference in criteria between

381 cf. CAA vol. III, p.44 and following pages.

382 cf.Veríssimo Serrão, Joaquim (ed.) *Comentários de Afonso de Albuquerque* Imprensa Nacional, 1973., vol. II, p.276 and III, p.183.

383 cf. LI, vol. I, pp 794; 817, and 837.

ourselves and our informants, the latter also reveal personal bias, by championing some of the interpreters on the basis of certain traits of personality, rather than providing us with a more balanced appraisal of their talents.

As previously mentioned, the most renowned of all the interpreters who worked for the *Estado da Índia*, Gaspar da Gama, as well as spying, started out with very scant if any knowledge of Portuguese and confused information about India, according to the first-hand account by Alvaro Velho: *"e falava tanto e tantas cousas que de cando em quando se alcançava."*[384] but was valued for the strategic counsel he provided and his business acumen. Yet, he made frequent mistakes, either deliberately, such as telling the Portuguese that there were many Christian sovereigns in India[385], or unintentionally, by advising them to build a fort at Angediva (which proved too difficult and costly to maintain, and so was dismantled in 1506, two years after its construction) and to conquer Aden, which Afonso de Albuquerque did not quite manage to do. He vaunted his own successes in a bid to gain recompense from King Manuel and too often these accounts have underpinned his reputation as a great interpreter. We would, therefore, opt for a more ambivalent appraisal of his contribution as a *lingua.*

These interpreters, of course, are an important source of information on their own activities, although this naturally suggests that they attributed themselves greater value or expertise than their clients did. It was the *lingua,* to be understood as both guide and interpreter, who left us an anonymous account of António de Brito's expedition to Eastern India and the Bengal Sea region, during which he visited Chittagong; Gaur, and Pegu.[386] The anonymity of this narrative *per se* speaks volumes of its author's status and the disdain awarded it by contemporary writers, yet even if the author's natural bias is

384 Fontoura da Costa, op. cit. p. 75. Our translation: "And he spoke so much and of so many different things, that from time to time, he got muddled". cf. Mascarenhas de Almeida, Sérgio *Em Torno das Cartas de Gaspar da Gama de 1500*, accessed at: http://www.academia.edu/3854349/As_cartas_de_Gaspar_da_India_de_1500 on 27 June 2014.

385 Cf. Ed. Aubin, Jean *Voyages de Vasco da Gama, Relations des Expéditions de 1497-99& 1502-03,* Editions Chandeigne, Paris 1995, p.34.

386 Cf. Bouchon, G. & Thomas, L.F. (eds.) *Voyage dans les Delta du gange et de l'Irraouaddy (1521),* Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian – Centro Cultural Português, 1988.

taken into consideration, we can glean a good deal about his various talents. First and foremost, we learn that he was Portuguese by birth and fluent in Persian, having lived for a number of years in a Persian-speaking area, and possibly Arabic, too. His knowledge of protocol proved valuable, as he demonstrated to the rest of the Embassy how to greet the King of Gaur, and he actually saved the party from an untimely beheading by virtue of the amicable relationship he had forged with the King's secretary:

> *"E acertou de passar o sacretairo a quem eu tinha dado muitas peças e o tinha tomado por valedor, pera que com el rei despachasse os nossos negocios, e lhe pidi por mercê que quisesse dar aquela a el rei. E ele se achegou a mim e em grande segredo me disse que já não era neceçairo carta nhua, que já a sentença era dada, que ao outro dia nos haviam de cortar as cabeças;"*[387]

following this up with a dramatic intervention using his own words rather than translating, in which he convinced the king to spare their lives. Not only was he a sufficiently eloquent public speaker, but he also stood out as being sharper-witted when compared to the interpreter of a rival embassy:

> *"E estando assi todos el rei perguntou dizendo: «com que cousas de cá destas partes folgará el-Rei de Portugal?» E foi-lhe respondido pela lingua de Cristóvão Jusarte que se adiantou a falar, que com alguns arcos e sobreceus, do qual el rei se virou pera os grandes senhores e começou a rir. Então o sacretario acenando pera mim, lhe disse: "Pregunte Vossa Alteza àquela*

387 Ibid, item 63, p. Translation included in the said edition: "When it happened that the Secretary passed whom I had presented with several pieces of fabric and adopted as my protector, for the purpose of encouraging the Sultan to put our affairs in order, I asked if he would do me the favour of handing the letter to the king. He drew near me and told me in great secret that there was no longer a need for letters, that the sentence had already been passed and that we were to be beheaded the following day."

lingua e ela lhe dirá disso a verdade, porque estoutro está fora de si, segundo o que mostra em suas mal concertadas palavras."[388]

He is also more honourable and courageous than his fellow linguist: on the one hand, offering to be the first to be executed (which ultimately was not necessary), in view of his role as the *lingoa* and secondly, because the other, João de Borba, who had taken up with renegades, also tried to use subterfuge to conceal Ali Agha's (a Turk) treachery towards the Portuguese. This profile that we have drawn of our anonymous source bears obvious similarities to Gaspar Correia's description of Gaspar Rodrigues based on his behaviour in other diplomatic interpreting missions, cited above, and indeed the editors of this narrative of the Journey to Irrawaddy, Bouchon and Thomaz, have put forward the hypothesis, through a comparison of biographical details, that Rodrigues was indeed the interpreter-author concerned. Consequently, we can affirm that his self-assessment is corroborated by a contemporary chronicler's, who presumably drew his conclusions without having access to this autobiographical account.

Furthermore, in this particular assessment, we can observe a certain convergence between the values appreciated in those times and what we would consider necessary attributes for a quality interpreter. Another shrewd observation is advanced by another interpreter, Francisco d'Albuquerque, when he claims in his rather boastful letter to King Manuel that: *"Nem todos os que fallam sam boos pera limgoas; porque, se asy fosse, os papagayos, com suas farpadas limgoas, também fallam."*[389] Whilst he also claims to be an extraordinary linguist, (not without good grounds but nevertheless he somewhat exaggerated) in this case, he may well have been referring to his negotiating skills underpinned by detailed knowledge of local customs, for he states that he has

388 Ibid, item 85 p. . Translation included in the said edition: "To all of us gathered there the Sultan asked what it would please the King of Portugal to receive as a gift from his country. Cristóvão Jusarte's interpreter went forward and stated that some bows and bed canopies would be sufficient. Turning to the great lords the Sultan began to laugh. It was then that the Secretary made a sign to me saying: «Your Highness should address that interpreter; he will tell you the truth since this other one has no sense at all as his misplaced words have demonstrated."

389 CAA, vol. III, p.374. Our translation: "Not everyone who can speak makes a good interpreter, if that were the case, then parrots, with their barbed tongues, also speak."

saved the Portuguese authorities a significant sum of money: *"faziamos asemtar solldo aos piais a terça parte menos do que ho capitam mor lhe mandava dar, asy pelo semelhante nos presentes e dadiuas que queria dar aos capitães gentios, e tudo ysto porque sabiamos as usanças da terra."*[390] Yet, whilst Francisco may have provided valuable services to the Portuguese, he was not highly considered because of serious character failings, such as a certain arrogance and self-interest (seen in his letters) as well as question marks hanging over his loyalty, certainly exacerbated by his Jewish origins. Therefore, the overall opinion of him amongst his contemporaries does not appear to do justice to his professional talents.

On occasions, the problematic characters of interpreters actually led to calls for their being removed from their posts. We will recall that Afonso de Albuquerque did actually switch Duarte Barbosa away from Cannanore to prevent him from supporting local unrest. Other examples include local-born linguists, who intentionally endangered interests of the Portuguese Crown, such as Diogo Alvarez, who similarly in the eyes of another Malabar, the brave captain Francisco de Siqueira, was behind the unrest at Cochin fort:

> *"se fyzeram muytas couzas mall feytas, as quais sam muyto desnecesaryas e nam servyso de Vosa Alteza, e nesta mesma fortaleza esta hum lyngoa que há por nome Dyogo Allvarez, o quall he muito nesesaryo fora desta fortaleza, e asym de toda a costa do Malavar, porque hele he o que mete estes capytais em revollta, e se eles nam fazem ho que devem, o mesmo Dyogo Allvarez o faz fazer a asym tambem mete os moros na arte e a tudo ysto compre a servyso de Vosa Alteza."* [391]

390 CAA vol. III, p.44. Our translation: "we stipulated a stipend for the foot-soldiers which was a third less than the captain-of-the-fleet had ordered they be paid, and likewise with the presents and gifts that he wanted to give to the pagan captains, and all this because we know local customs."

391 Silva Rego, António da (ed.) *Documentação para a História da Missões do Padroado Português*, Lisboa, Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1947, Vol. IV, p.227. Letter from Francisco de Sequeira to the King of Portugal, Cochim, 1549. Our translation: "Many things were badly done, which are quite unnecessary and not in Your Highness' service, and in this very fortress there is a

whilst Iticona was accused of being the ringleader of a despotic network that stole Crown property, and was denounced to the Viceroy:

> *"Item os regedores sam hus grandes tiranos e tão mãos homens que pubricamente vendem a justiça e furtão da Fazenda del rei o que querem a saber hum que se chama Itirey Eiticona limgoa por quem tudo se governa."*[392]

Clearly, this kind of behaviour did indeed prevent them from carrying out their duties as expected and thus justifies the importance attached to this aspect by the Portuguese authorities, particularly since these interpreters were state employees and no longer the opportunists providing one-off services, or captives forced into the undertaking. Moreover, in cases such as the last ones, there are undoubtedly some parallels with today's code of conduct and ethics for interpreters, of vital importance for the confidence of users of linguistic mediation in the fields of diplomacy and international business.

5.1.2 Interpreting quality as perceived by the religious orders

As mentioned previously, the religious orders and once again, the Jesuits in particular, circumvented many of the dilemmas concerning interpreter integrity by narrowing their field of recruitment, precluding *a priori* certain groups from taking up this activity, such as non-Christians and criminal elements (deportees and renegades).

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lingoa who goes by the name of Dyogo Allvarez, who very much needs to be removed from the fortress, because he is the one who sparks the Captains' revolt, and if they are doing what they shouldn't, it is because Dyogo Allvarez makes them do it, and he also gets the Moslems involved and this is all whilst he is in Your Highness' service."

392 Excerpt from Letter from Henrique de Sousa Chichorro to D. João de Castro, 28.7.1546, in Sanceau, Elaine and Lalande, Maria de Lourdes (eds.). *Collecção de São Lourenço,* Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1973 Vol. III p.282. Our translation: "The village chiefs are terrible tyrants and such bad men that they publicly sell justice and freely steal the King's property, in particular, one called Itirey Eiticona *lingoa* who is in charge of everything."

Their relationship with their linguistic mediators contrasts with that of the *Estado da Índia*, in that to a certain point, the Jesuits expected their interpreters to enter the Society and remain with it for the rest of their lives. They did of course still have ethical concerns, for these linguists, or *topazes*, often of mixed race, had to set an example for local Christians and potential converts. In the late 1570's, the Jesuit visitor, Alessandro Valignano, sent out instructions to his brethren in India, including various guidelines on interpreter behaviour and competence, which can be likened to a rudimentary Code of Conduct including disciplinary measures, for issues of both ethics and quality:

> *"Procurai com toda a diligencia de ter bons meirinhos, canacapoles e topazes que vivão bem e sem escandolo, e vos refirão a verdade, os quais saibão bem o que hão-de fazer conforme a seus officios.... E procurai emquanto puder que sejão todos casados, amoestando-os e favorecendo-os conforme ao que cada hum merecer, e quando forem maos suspendendo-os de seu officio a tempo"*[393]

Valignano also sketched a profile for the boys who should be taken into the seminaries for instruction, setting out that they should already be literate in the local language, Malabar (Tamil), at least, and not be "rich", so that they would not be tempted to leave the Society and set themselves up in commerce instead:

> *"Tenhais muita diligencia de criar os topazes que possão fazer as praticas, enviando a Coulão os que são necessarios pera que aprendão, os quaes procurai quando os emviaes que saibão bem (ler e) escrever malavar, e sejão habiles pera sairem bons topzes, e não sejão ricos porque não vão a chatinar."*[394]

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393 DI, XI, pp.15-16. Our translation: "Do everything within your power to ensure you have good wardens; catechists and *topazes* who live righteously and without scandal, and who are truthful. They must know exactly how to perform their duties. And wherever possible, try to ensure they are married, reprimand and reward them as each one deserves, and when they are bad, suspend them from duty in good time."

394 DI, vol. XI. p.7. Our translation: "Be most diligent in raising *topazes* who will be able to deliver

Since by and large, selection procedures obviated the issues pertaining to their interpreters' character, the priests were able to devote greater attention to their technical skills, also because their communication objectives had distinctly more influence on their ultimate goals of conversion and upholding of the faith, than was the case for the *Estado da Índia*'s economic and political aims. Throughout their correspondence, there are references to interpreter performance, some mentioning specific cases, others of a more general nature. Overall, we are aware of the fact that during the sixteenth century, there was an acute shortage of competent interpreters at their disposal, despite their investment in training, but some priests were also quick to acknowledge when they were well-served. We recall that St. Francis Xavier bemoaned the poor grasp that his interpreters on the Fisheries coast had of Portuguese, and indeed other priests echoed his comments, such as Nicola Lancelloti: "*falar per ynterpretes, por elles se faz muy pouco fruyto, porque muy poucos ynterpretes se achão que entendão exactamente as linguas.*"[395]

Curiously, it was not only their knowledge of Portuguese that was called into question by the Jesuits, but on occasion, also their grasp of their mother tongue, such as in the embassy to the Moghul Court of Akbar, where one of the interpreters had seemingly forgotten his Persian, and St. Francis Xavier's criticism of his Chinese interpreter, António: *"Achei que António não presta para jurobaça, porque lhe esqueceu falar china,"*[396] which was also commented on by Alessandro Valignano in his History of the Beginnings of the Society of Jesus in the Orient, as a complete ignorance of Mandarin and woeful expression in common Cantonese, with Xavier's other servant

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sermons, sending those that you need to Kollam to be trained. Try to ensure that the ones you send already know how to (read and) write Tamil well, and that they have the right aptitude for making good interpreters, and that they are not rich, otherwise they will go and trade."

395 DI, II, p. 381. Letter from Father. Nicola Lancellotti to Ignacio de Loyola. Our translation: "Speaking through interpreters, through them we make very little headway, because very few interpreters can be found who accurately understand the languages."

396 From a Letter to Father Francisco Pérez in Malacca, from Sanchão, 22 October, 1552 in *Obras Completas*, pp. 739-40. Our translation: "I thought that António was of no use as an interpreter, as he has forgotten how to speak Chinese."

being in a similar position.[397] Shortcomings in their ability to express themselves were at times combined with the inability to assimilate the concepts involved, frustrating the priests' conversion efforts (in this first example at Akbar's court):

> *"Before the coming of the Fathers, Aegidius – for that was the name of this priest – had made zealous attempts to instruct the King, and in this he had been greatly assisted by the King's own decided leanings towards Christianity. However, he had been prevented from making much progress by the ignorance of his interpreter"*[398]

and in general terms in China, where the low number of converts was attributed to sub-standard local interpreters by Father Melchior Nunes, who accordingly changed strategy to give precedence to the study of Chinese by the members of the Society and reduce the need for linguistic mediators.[399] Unsurprisingly, given his own high standards, a similar conclusion was drawn by Father Henrique Henriques concerning the Jesuits' slow progress in India.

> *"Trabajaremos todos los padres para que en pocos años los cristianos de aquellas partes entiendan y crean los misterios de la fee, porque hasta aqui, como la cosa yva por interpretes, no podian bien entender las cosas della, por los interpretes no saber declarar las tales cosas,"*[400]

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397 Cf. Valignano, Alessandro *Historia del principio y progresso de la Compañia de Jesús en las Indias orientales (1542-64)* Roma, Institutum historicum S.I., 1944, p.211

398 Hoyland, J.S. & Bannerjee S. N. (Trans. & Ed.), *The Commentary of Father Monserrate, S.J. On his journey to the Court of Akbar* Asian Educational Services, New Delhi/Madras, 1992, p.29.

399 Cf. DI, III, p.714, Footnote 53.

400 Excerpt from a Letter from Padre Henrique Henriques to his fellow brethren in Portugal, 12.1.1551, Cochim, reprinted in Silva Rego, António da *Documentaçao para a História das Missões do Padroado Português,* Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1947, Vol. V, p. 49. Our translation: "We priests shall all strive to ensure that within a few years the Christians in those areas will understand and believe the mysteries of the faith, because until now, as we had to use interpreters, they could not understand them well, because the interpreters did not know how to proclaim such things."

One of the most important assessment criteria, therefore, was linguistic knowledge, which some of the priests were in a better position to judge than those working for the state, for they had studied local languages, including Father Henrique Henriques, who as author of several books in Tamil can be deemed an expert witness. He considered one young man to be the best interpreter of Tamil he had found because of his translating abilities; strong memory, and sharp intellect:

> *"E, segundo são as ocupações, não tirara o que tirey, se não fora com ajuda de huum topaz que Nosso Senhor nos descubrio, o melhor que agora se acha desta lingoa. Escrevo eu em portuguez o que convem treladar, e tenho huum moço que lhe lea e juntamente huum scrivão, que nesta terra chamão canacapole, pera screver em malavar o que o topaz dictar; e assi sem muito trabalho estão escritas algumas cousas, as quaes revejo e emendo o errado. Teem tal engenho e memoria este topaz, que aas vezes, dizendo-lhe clausulas mui compridas em portuguez, as torna em malavar, que hé muito d'espantar."*[401]

Another significant issue for the priests was their interpreters' faculty to grasp religious tenets, that is to say their thematic knowledge, as well as general intellectual ability. High praise was sung of the talented and discreet *topaz* Dom Afonso de Noronha, once an Ambassador of the King of Ceylon, for his wide knowledge of both the Hindu and Christian religions, whilst his high social standing was expected to

401 DI, II, p. 395. Letter from Father Henrique Henriques to Ignacio de Loyola (Punicale 1552). Our translation: "As we have so many occupations, I would not have drawn up as much I have, were it not for the help of a *topaz*, that Our Lord sent us, the best to be found in this language. I write in Portuguese what we need to translate, and I have a young man who reads it to him and also a secretary, who is called a *canacapole* in these lands, to write what the interpreter dictates to him in Tamil; and thus, without too much work, some things have been taken down, which I review and correct any mistakes. This interpreter is so sharp and has such a good memory, that sometimes, we say very long clauses in Portuguese to him and he switches them into Tamil, which is quite astonishing."

persuade local dignitaries to convert.[402] During Luís de Almeida's follow-up visit to a bonze[403] in 1562, who St. Francis Xavier had previously spoken to, but without translation, the so-called *dojuku* he took with him to interpret gave him considerable help in his evangelisation and conversion. The bonze's own words reveal the added value of a linguistic mediator who was both fluent in the languages and versed in religion:

> *"E se então quando o Pe. Mestre Francisco aqui estava, que quazi não tinha lingua para se explicar, em tanta maneira se me convencia o entendimento, quanto mais agora que falais comigo em particular por hum interprete de minha nação tão entendido em vossas couzas que me não fica nenhuma duvida em alguma que lhe perguntei."*[404]

As we mentioned in the previous chapter, another consideration for the Jesuits was their interpreters' ability to speak in public, as they would often be called on to address large crowds and to convince them of their arguments. In addition to speaking in a loud and confident voice, one technique used, which is an integral part of modern interpreting method, was to assume ownership of the speech by using the first person, as revealed by this example in which a blind woman is unable to distinguish between the priest and the interpreter, who we can therefore deem to have been most convincing: *"Bautizé un viejo de muchos annos, el qual se vino para mí luego que le hallé, de se hazer christiano, y una mujer ciega creyendo que se hechava a mis pies, se hechó a los de la lengua porque hablava "yo" y no quería despegarse."*[405]

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402 Cf. DI, II, p.523.

403 From the Portuguese *"bonzo"* a Buddhist priest.

404 Fróis, Luís *História de Japam* Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, 1976, vol. I, p.218. Our translation: "And if Father Francisco, who when he was here barely had an interpreter with him to explain his purpose, managed to convince me of so many things, now I am left in no doubt about anything which I have asked as you are talking to me in private through an interpreter who is my compatriot and understands your things so well."

405 DI, vol. V, p. 57. Our translation: "I christened a very old man today, who converted as soon as I came across him, and a blind woman, who thought she was throwing herself at my feet, but threw herself at the interpreters', because he said "I" and did not want to let go of him."

Through this detailed observation of the priests' first-hand reactions to interpreter performance, we have managed to compile a set of criteria which were commonly employed to assess its quality, primarily from the viewpoint of one who is interpreted and focuses on the impact that his words have on the audience. Clearly, one must take into account that the speakers expected the audience or listeners not just to understand the message but to be receptive to its contents, an aspect which we would nowadays consider to go beyond an interpreters' responsibility, and which could lead us to conclude that some of the criticism was perhaps harsh. Nevertheless, the various judgements delivered on linguistic mediation in religious settings reveal the close attention the religious orders paid to this issue and its key role for the success of their mission. The fact that they could clearly distinguish between good and poor performance and attribute plausible grounds for its success or failure, primarily on the basis of technical competence leads us to the deduction that their assessment of the quality of interpreting is sounder than that of the governing class in Portuguese India and contemporary historians, and coincides to a significant degree with the principles used by today's experts: knowledge of both languages and ability to express ideas clearly and fluently in them; knowledge of the subject matter; intellectual ability; short-term memory, and public-speaking skills.

Through a rich and varied experience, the religious orders knew what was needed from a linguistic mediator, thus they could guide training efforts to produce competent ones. In the next section, we shall observe their engagement in this area and see how it contributed to filling the void that they necessarily encountered upon their arrival in India.

5.2 THE SKILLS AND TRAINING OF INTERPRETERS DURING THE AGE OF DISCOVERY

5.2.1 The lack of an official training policy

Before the modern age of conference interpreter training delivered in specialised

schools, there was a fairly widespread belief that practitioners had an unnatural talent, a gift that one was born with and which could not be acquired. This gift was essentially to have been raised bilingually from the cradle and thus to be able to switch effortlessly between languages. Such a figure would have been ideal for the Portuguese undertakings in the Age of Discoveries, but we have already seen that born interpreters were few and far between and fell well short of the explorers' quantitative needs. The few who were natural bilinguals or polyglots hailed from marginal groups in society, often non-Christians, and thus were not ideal for the reasons which we have already mentioned in detail. Moreover, during expeditions, as the Portuguese were initiating contacts with hitherto unknown languages and cultures there was no possibility at all of finding ready-made linguists, thus the only paths to providing adequately for their language needs were through a sustained training effort or through the creation of naturally bilingual language communities.

Something of a myth has been created around the training of interpreters by the Portuguese since their early voyages of discovery along the West coast of Africa. Several of today's historians have repeated an earlier claim that there was a deliberate policy to capture locals and take them back to Portugal to train them as interpreters. In other words, they would be taught Portuguese and could then serve as interpreters on subsequent voyages. As we have stated above, this is an exaggeration that stems from the misconception of the first *lingoas* as interpreters. We have posited that the figure of *lingoa* was an informant and thus the purpose of taking native Africans to Portugal was firstly to try and extract information from them and secondly to enslave them.[406] The immediate strategy to obtain this information was to use the so-called interpreters of African languages already living in Portugal, who presumably would have either been bought from slave traders (Europeans who bought them from North Africans), a practice that dated back at least until the end of the fourteenth century, or have been exchanged for Moorish prisoners.[407]

406 cf. Zurara, Gomes Eanes de *Crónica da Guiné* (Ed. José Bragança) Livraria Civilização, Lisboa 1973, p. 73.

407 cf. Tinhorão, José Ramos *Os Negros em Portugal* Caminho, 2nd edition, 1988, p. 46-7.

Such a procedure was described by Cadamosto and was referred to in the previous section. Subsequently, after having remained in Portugal for some time, the new captives would pick up Portuguese and be able to communicate more freely, supplying fuller information about their homelands. We have not found any evidence of there having been deliberately taught Portuguese (in addition, it seems unlikely given their status as slaves), rather it happened naturally as a result of prolonged contact with the language. There was of course the incentive for them to learn, for if they appeared useful as guides for future voyages, then they could embark and perhaps achieve their freedom, either through escaping or by making four voyages, as described by Cadamosto.[408] Hence, we can certainly detect a concern on the Portuguese part to include African slaves who could facilitate communication among the crew, but they had not been specifically trained as interpreters, and one can speculate as to the relative importance of this function in the narrow sense, i.e. the translation of dialogues, as compared to helping with navigation and providing information about trading opportunities.

The one notable exception to the fortuitous education described above appears to have been the case of the students from Congo, but their situation was quite different to that of the *turgimães* operating on the Guinean coast. Firstly, this episode took place at a much later date, towards the end of the 1480's, and secondly, they were not captured or enslaved, rather they were a party of noblemen led by a certain Dom Rodrigo who had the title of Ambassador and were treated accordingly in Portugal. Moreover, there was never an intention that they should serve on ships or act as guides, in fact, the aim of their stay in Portugal was primarily to learn more about Christian doctrine, so that they could foster the evangelisation effort in the kingdom of Congo, and obviously in order to do so, they had to learn Portuguese. They would of course prove useful as informants to the Portuguese crown, but it was far from obvious that they would subsequently act as interpreters upon their return home:

> *"Depois disso, (D. Afonso) expediu o Embaixador a El-Rei de Portugal, que até então se havia demorado na Corte por azo*

408 cf. Cadamosto, pp.148-9.

daqueles levantamentos; e, na companhia desse, mandou um outro Embaixador seu, que se nomeava Dom Rodrigo, com alguns parentes dele, e do mesmo Embaixador, com fundamento de aprenderem a doutrina dos Cristãos em Portugal, bem como o idioma, e darem conta a El-Rei dos acontecimentos passados."[409]

What is perhaps more telling is that according to Lopez and Pigafetta's chronicle cited above, the initiative was taken by the recently converted King Afonso of Congo, in his religious fervour, and not by the Portuguese after all, pointing to a greater interest in such learning among the "discovered" than the "discoverers". Eventually, King João II ordered that their expenses be covered by the Crown and they were educated in convents in Lisbon. We believe, therefore, that prior to Vasco da Gama's voyage to India, it is difficult to sustain that the Portuguese had a policy for preparing native interpreters.

Evidently, there were some Portuguese who acquired knowledge of African languages, but trustworthy ones appear to have been pitifully few: we have already referred to João Fernandes, who learned Arabic in a Moorish jail; spent several months in Guinea and later returned to the area as a negotiator, and Martim Afonso, the only native Portuguese interpreter for African languages (a rather broad scope) on Gama's discovery of the sea route to India, in a fleet of four ships. The Portuguese did pursue the aforementioned policy of taking convicts with them, but the main idea of leaving the *lançados* at the various stop-off points on the route was for them to collect information and be picked up again by the next ship, although the fluency acquired (as a means of survival) in the local language and culture enabled them on occasion to be drafted as interpreters. The other category of *lançados,* those who jumped ship, did not work for the Crown thereafter, but were an important link in the communication chain between

409 Lopez, Duarte & Pigafetta, Filippo *Relação do Reino do Congo e das Terras Circumvizinhas* Trad. Rosa Capaens, Agência Geral do Ultramar, Lisboa 1951, p.102. Our translation: "After this, (D. Afonso) dispatched the Ambassador to the King of Portugal, who until then had remained at Court by dint of those rebellions; and, in his company, he sent another Ambassador of his, entitled Dom Rodrigo, with some of his relatives and of the said Ambassador's, for the purposes of learning Christian doctrine in Portugal, as well as the language, and to tell the king about past events."

local dignitaries and Portuguese traders, by dint of their language and cultural skills and position in local society. Therefore, in all these instances, competences were acquired informally and were not intended for or specific to interpreting *per se.* One obviously would find it difficult to imagine an alternative in an era in which education was extremely limited in scope (subject areas and student population). We can thus conclude that after several decades of sea voyages and much frustration caused by language barriers, the Portuguese set off to conquer a new continent with barely any more linguists than they had had at the beginning of the Discoveries.

The pattern was repeated in India: initially, there were a handful of natural interpreters, who by twist of fate knew at least both a Romance language and either Arabic or one from the Indian sub-continent, but again rarely did they fulfil all the qualities that the Portuguese sought in a linguistic mediator. Yet, we have not found evidence of a deliberate attempt to solve this conundrum through training either in ethics or language learning, unlike Columbus, who specifically noted down in his log-book on 14 October 1492 that a group of natives were to be taken to Spain to be taught Castilian and "*return them"* (our translation), which could be construed, as Kurz has done, to mean that they would then serve as interpreters.[410] Instead, the reaction of figures like Afonso d'Albuquerque was two-fold: on the one hand, he kept the interpreters he had as slaves and punished them whenever he suspected them of disloyalty. Whilst on the other hand, he was instrumental in pursuing the other possibility, namely the creation of a bilingual and ostensibly Christian community, through his encouragement to Portuguese men to settle in India and marry local women, but again not for the main purpose of producing potential interpreters but to increase the Christian population. It would of course take a number of years before they or indeed their offspring could possibly work as interpreters and in the meantime the Portuguese had to struggle with their makeshift linguists, few of whom apparently warranted the

410 cf. Kurz, Ingrid *An Eclectic Journey through the History of Interpreting* Acceptance Speech of the Danica Seleskovitch Prize 20 March 2012, ESIT, Paris. Accessed at: http://www.google.pt/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCMQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.danica-seleskovitch.org%2FDiscours_Kurz_10mars12.pdf&ei=iTK-U9jQIMqU0QXX5YG4Bw&usg=AFQjCNG6Oi7Uefov60FX9zcnLiLbWmmfyw&sig2=oEPMkp2ZEO9WWjNVqVFI4Q&bvm=bv.70138588,d.d2k on 10 July 2014.

confidence of their masters.

5.2.2 Selection and training of interpreters by the religious orders

The first signs of interpreter training in the East in fact came from the religious orders, but unsurprisingly their main focus was on the areas which are of greatest interest to their particular objectives. The founding of the first seminary, the *Seminário da Santa Fé* in Goa, was originally a Franciscan undertaking promoted by friar Diogo Borba and Vicar-General Miguel Vaz. It was funded by the donations of local Christians (and not by the State) and at its inception had the purpose of disseminating the Catholic faith, but was quickly considered for training local boys for the priesthood. In the Goa seminary, soon handed over to Jesuit control, Sousa de Faria notes that in 1545 the main body of students were young men, aged between twenty and twenty and one, but there was also another group of young boys aged between seven and eight.[411] Seabra and Manso defend that seminarists were accepted between the ages of thirteen and fifteen,[412] but in all likelihood given the variety of opinions and contrasting evidence, there were different conditions in different times and places. There is agreement, however, that the initial intake was not of Portuguese born in India or *mestiços* (children of mixed race), but of converted *"filhos todos dos naturaes da Índia"*[413], Those who attended the

411 BNL, Codex 176, p.98 apud. Sousa de Faria, Patrícia *A Conversão das Almas do Oriente* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2008) pp.95-6, accessed at: http://www.google.pt/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCAQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.historia.uff.br%2Fstricto%2Fteses%2FTese-2008_FARIA_Patricia_Souza_de-S.pdf&ei=wf7U63cH9LJ0AXL1oHAAw&usg=AFQjCNFvBIDjqCWX8sVQHiIg1aOJx5xlYw&sig2=FEHFxl2iBRWEhBgyH1jIBg&bvm=bv.70138588,d.d2k on 8 July 2014. Our translation: "All children of the natives of India."

412 cf. Seabra, Leonor Diaz de and Manso, Maria de Deus Beites *Ensino e Missão Jesuíta no Oriente* accessed at: http://www.google.pt/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCkQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fdspace.uevora.pt%2Frdpc%2Fbitstream%2F10174%2F8852%2F3%2FArtigo.pdf&ei=UGy-U4PcCeyS0AW85oH4BA&usg=AFQjCNGzR1Q8Yfgf9hdupDdt3W5P96cquA&sig2=6zmayIIOToxsyemF5ckJLw&bvm=bv.70138588,d.d2k on 10 July 2014

413 cf. Sousa de Faria, Patrícia, op. cit., p.95.

seminary were chosen, above all, in the light of their willingness to attend, their existing knowledge of the language,[414] and their good character, something which could not be guaranteed amongst the *mestiços*, whose debauchery shocked the priests. In addition, candidates for the priesthood should among other things come from a good caste, either Brahmin or Chardo, (presumably so that they would be respected by those to whom they would preach and try to convert).[415]

What is interesting for us about this selection procedure is that the Jesuits considered the employment of their seminarists as interpreters as a fall-back position, destined for those who were not good enough to reach priesthood:

> *"E os que não chegassem a isso, pelo menos poderiam servir de línguas e intérpretes dos ministros do Santo Evangelho que também nisso era grande o proveito que se tiraria, pois as nações dos infieís destas partes eram tantas e tão vãs que não era possível em tão pouco tempo poderem os pregadores evangélicos saber as línguas de todas elas em a perfeição que se requeria para suficientemente lhes poderem declarar os mistérios da nossa Fé."*[416]

The training of interpreters was a by-product in this case of religious training and what is more, those who would become interpreters were, in Jesuit eyes, the weakest students. Additionally, they had given up a community who would perhaps have greater

414 cf. Seabra and Manso, op. cit. p.4. Although not explicit in the article, one presumes that it is knowledge of the Portuguese language.

415 cf. DI, vol.XI, p. 28. Valignano's instructions for the recruitment of students for the Coulão seminary.

416 Trindade, Fr. Paulo da, *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente*, Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1964, vol. I p. 266. Our translation: "And those who did not make it that far, could at least serve as *lingoas* and interpreters of the ministers of the Holy Gospel, for this would also be of great use, since there are so many infidel nations in these parts and so futile, that it would be impossible for the preachers of the Gospel to know all the languages in such a short space of time and to the level of perfection required to be able to declare the mysteries of the Holy Faith to them properly."

aptitude for interpreting, namely the naturally bilingual, on moral grounds.[417] Whilst interpreters were important, visible in the numerous references Jesuits made to a shortage of them, they were a secondary consideration compared to new recruits for the clergy. The fact that they should share a common education and Christian principles (perhaps ultimately leading to the sacrificing of linguistic skill or natural aptitude) would certainly have had a beneficial effect on their thematic knowledge and could have had a positive impact on their performance, for they were able to identify with the speaker's arguments, which they had to convey convincingly. In this regard, we can once more observe a sharp contrast with the approach adopted by the *Estado da Índia*, in that, the latter only took language skills into consideration (to get the job done) in the selection phase, even though they were hardly in a position to judge them, whereas paradoxically it was the interpreter's personal qualities that were considered all important in the field. Even so, this was when they actually selected interpreters on merit, rather than demerit which was when they merely chose the crew member or soldier of least value. Consequently, they were obliged to rely on interpreters whose morals and allegiance were questionable and/or whose cultural affinity was in doubt, something that they regularly bemoaned in reports to the Portuguese king. In short, had there been more concern about selecting and preparing interpreters, the level of satisfaction among users could have been higher.

As regards the presence of the younger seminarists referred to above, later Jesuit correspondence indicates this was common policy in certain institutions and in their case, it appears that the motives for educating them were inverted, that is to say, that the initial objective was to teach the boys to read and write and then train them as *topazes*, by teaching them Portuguese. Only at a later date, would their joining the clergy be considered:

> *"L'altro rimedio é il procurare di crear molti di questi fanciulli della terra che apparino bene la lingua portuesa et si instroiscono a servir per interpreti et ancora, quelli che saranno*

417 Subsequently, those of Portuguese descent were admitted because the Portuguese living in India only wanted to confess to Portuguese priests. cf. Seabra and Manso, op. cit.p. 4 footnote 4.

capaci, farli studiare per sacerdoti,"[418]

As we can see from this text, the idea of training boys as interpreters was actually a response to the communication difficulties that the priests were encountering, as the priests apportioned their failure to convert in certain areas to their having to use interpreters who were not up to the task.[419] Younger boys were deemed to be better at learning the language and by residing at the college, they would also become much more familiar with Christian dogma and the concepts involved. From Jesuit correspondence, one can also glean that the seminary at Coulão (Kollam) became a specialised centre in this area of training, in particular, in ensuring that these *topazes* would be equipped to explain the faith to their local communities.[420]

The priests often expressed their satisfaction with their young disciples, in particular their good manners and sharp wit:

> *"Hé este moço de idade de 13 annos, de bom juizo e discrição, e habil pera todas as cousas que lhe mandão fazer, e gentil homem e bem desposto. Esperamos em o Senhor que sairá hum bom topaz e que há-de fazer muito fruito e trazer todos seus parentes à fee."*[421]

singling out, as in this case, the most talented ones in both interpreting and oral

418 DI, X, p.175.Our translation: "The other solution is to try and raise many of these local children who learn Portuguese well and educate them to serve as interpreters, and then, have the capable ones study for the priesthood."

419 cf. DI, X, pp.172-5. The linguistically talented Father Henrique Henriques was instrumental in the successful evangelisation in Travancore, whereas results on the Fisheries Coast were disappointing by comparison. The difference was attributed by Valignano in this letter written during his sea voyage from Coulão to Goa in 1575, precisely to better quality communication.

420 cf. DI, XI, p.7; DI VIII, p.154.

421 DI, VIII, p.165. Letter from Pedro Correia, Coulão, 1569. Our translation: "This lad is thirteen years' old, has good sense and is discreet, and skillful in all the tasks he is asked to perform, a kind man and good-natured. We hope our Lord will make a good *topaz* of him and that he will make many gains and bring all his relatives to the faith."

translation tasks, (which comprised translating religious texts that were dictated to them in short bursts for a clerk or secretary to transcribe). The importance attached to the training effort was reflected in the rapid expansion of colleges and seminaries, which came to number well over a dozen in the Provinces of Goa and Malabar before the end of the sixteenth century. Whilst they were primarily destined for training future priests, there is no doubt, that the Jesuits included the deliberate training of indigenous students as interpreters as part of their evangelisation strategy, as can be seen by the following suggestion from Father António Quadros:

> *"E porque não se sabe a lingoa nen tem lá intérprete, pollo que se pode fazer pouco fructo, vai hagora lá outro Padre de mais prudencia que o que laa ficou pera que, se vir disposição de aver fruito, se fique lá e, se o não ouver, leva huma carta do Viso-Rei em que manda que entreguem aos Padres 4 ou 5 moços que elles escolherem pera se quá doutrinarem e, trazidos estes, depois que souberem a limgoa portuguesa, que possão ser interpretes, se pode lá hir daqui a tres ou quatro annos."*[422]

We can see from this opinion that training a *topaz* was a long-term investment, justifying the precautions taken in selecting them, similar obviously to those taken for future priests. An even greater investment was made in bringing orphans from Lisbon to the East for the same purpose: to learn the language and serve as in-house interpreters, before going on to take the cloth. Of course, theirs was the opposite process in a sense, as they were learning an Oriental language and culture, but was a safer investment for the Jesuits to make, as they would be less tempted to choose a different path. Indeed,

422 DI, V, p. 740. Letter written by Padre P. A. de Quadros, Cochim 18 January 1563. Our translation: "And because we do not know the language nor is their an interpreter, not much progress could be made. Another father who is more circumspect than the one who has remained there, is on his way there now. Thus, if he sees that there is a possibility of making progress he will stay there, but if there is not, he is carrying a letter from the Viceroy with an order for four or five lads of their choosing to be given to the Fathers, so that they can be given religious instruction here and, having come here, once they know Portuguese, they can be interpreters, we can go there in three or four years' time."

some of the most notable Jesuit linguists particularly those serving in Japan, such as João Rodrigues, were graduates of this scheme.

In Japan, translators and interpreters were also recruited from among the converts to Christianity, the *dojukus*, who lived in the missions and thereby enjoyed intensive language training. The creation of this class of acolytes was actually derived from the fact that most European priests who had travelled to the East as adults, had enormous difficulties in learning Japanese and that there would never be enough linguists among them in quantity and quality to undertake the mass evangelising operation that St. Francis Xavier had envisaged. The *dojuku* were largely recruited from among the sons of the nobility and rarely from humbler classes, revealing once again, the Jesuit concern with the respect for their native assistants from their compatriots.[423] In addition, the Jesuits were keen to recruit *dojukus* at as young an age as possible, for learning Latin to a high standard was as difficult for adult Japanese as learning their language was for Europeans.[424]

The Jesuits on the whole were particularly dedicated to language learning: their own methods were almost extreme, beginning their study on the long sea-voyages and toiling to communicate with each other in the language they were trying to learn, be it Konkani or Japanese, as they sought to dispense with the need for interpreters for themselves and simultaneously perform this task for fellow brethren, especially the newcomers, and in Japan, as we have mentioned, for Portuguese merchants and their Japanese buyers. At the same time, we can see from Jesuit historian and fellow interpreter, Luis Fróis's, description that no effort was spared to instruct others, such as Paulo de Santa Fé, who was St. Francis Xavier's interpreter in Japan.

> *"Havia pouco tempo que em Goa fora recebido o Padre Cosme de Torres (...) e a elle tinha particularmente o Padre Mestre Francisco encarregado que se ocupasse cada dia, certas horas*

423 cf. Boxer, Charles *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1650* University of California Press, 1951, p.233.

424 Ibid, p.206

determinadas, em hir declarando a letra do Evangelho de S. Matheos a Paulo de Santa Fé, para melhor se introduzir nas cousas de Deos. E pela muita habilidade que tinha, fallava já a lingua portugueza de maneira que tudo se entendia, e se fazia capaz de tudo que se lhe ensinavão...'[425]

We can see in this example that the Jesuits' training method was very functional, a specialised language course, focusing on the most relevant lexical area in context. As Paulo de Santa Fé was integrated into the community living in St. Paul's college in Goa, while awaiting his return voyage to Japan, his preparation was both intensive and included immersion in the language.

The general training programme for future priests included philosophy and theology, thereby providing potential interpreters with indispensable thematic knowledge. Even those who were educated in the separate indigenous schools (introduced to prevent rivalry with students of Portuguese descent)[426] and the *dojukus* and who were destined to become catechists rather than priests were given instruction in how to pray. Role-plays were also an important part of the syllabus, whereby the members of the Society would deliver mock after-dinner sermons to their companions in the language they were learning, exercising their public-speaking skills at the same time, an aspect considered to be of fundamental importance, as analysed in the previous chapter.

The Jesuit visitor, Valignano, like Xavier before him, implored the Jesuit brothers to step up their efforts to learn local languages, both in India and Japan, (not least to secure their role as intermediaries in Luso-Japanese trade), but it was an arduous task for their meticulous approach entailed learning the difference between erudite and

425 Fróis, op. cit. p.21. Our translation: Father Cosme de Torres was received a short time ago in Goa (…) and Father Master Francisco had entrusted him in particular to spend a certain number of hours every day reading out loud the words of the Gospel of Saint Matthew to Paulo de Santa Fé, so that he would become more acquainted with the matters of God. And by virtue of his great gift, he could already speak Portuguese intelligibly, and was capable of doing everything he had been taught...."

426 cf. Seabra and Manso, op. cit. p.4.

everyday language (proven by their ability to vary their register according to their audience), and variations in pronunciation. The Jesuits started to produce their own training materials: Henrique Henriques produced a guide to Telugu, with its declinations and conjugations[427] and published his Tamil grammar; João Rodrigues produced his *Arte da Lingoa de Iapam,* and the *dojukus* themselves helped by producing simplified texts in Japanese for pedagogical purposes.[428]

Furthermore, Valignano obtained permission from the warlord Oda Nobunaga to build seminaries in Arima and Adzuchi and a college in Usuki, with the specific aim of improving the training of the *dojuku,*[429] including their preparation to work as interpreters. Others were sent to St. Paul's College in Macao, where they would be surrounded by Portuguese, for a cultural and linguistic immersion programme, free from the persecutions that Christians suffered in Japan. As one might expect with the Jesuits, the regime was rather harsh, so some defected to mendicant orders, such as the Franciscans, some of whose Japanese brothers were also renowned for their grasp of Portuguese. By the second decade of the seventeenth century, however, interpreter training efforts were to a certain extent supplanted by the emergence of a bilingual community in Nagasaki, the fruit of marital unions between Portuguese merchants and Japanese women.

In Macao, there was a clear divide between the interpreters working for merchants and those required by the missionaries; the former had a rudimentary grasp of Portuguese and were uneducated, whilst the latter had to be more erudite, in order to assist with written translations; the adaptation of Christian concepts to the Chinese mind-set, and serve as both interpreter and teacher of the priests who were trying to learn the language, before departing for mainland China. It was here in Macao, that we can observe the origins of the first body of official interpreters working for the state authorities, defined in the *Regimento do Lingua da Cidade, e dos Jurubaças menores, e Escrivaens (1627),* with a lengthy description of their duties and a number of precepts

427 cf. DI, V, p.688. Letter written by Father Henrique Henriques, Mannar, 1562.

428 cf. Boxer, op. cit., p.197.

429 Boxer, C.R. *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1650*, p.73

for their behaviour, situating them by way of preparation for their occupation, somewhere between religious and commercial interpreters.

The *Regimento* seems to be rather advanced for its time, since no other similar statute existed in the Portuguese Empire, yet, on the one hand, it emerged long after Macao's institutions had been established, as Paiva has pointed out,[430] and does not contain any provisions concerning training or qualifications. So, once again, we can see the Portuguese state relying on the emergence of bilingual communities or the Church to prepare interpreters. One can also argue that other European powers were equally at a loss in preparing suitable linguistic mediators for their early contacts with the Chinese, for they too had recourse to the linguists trained by the Jesuits at St. Paul's College, as well as other Portuguese interpreters, throughout Southern and South East Asia from India to Ceylon to the Indonesian archipelago, in some cases right up to the eighteenth or even nineteenth centuries, as explored earlier.[431] Yet, considering the frequent misunderstandings and perennial recruitment difficulties dating right back to the sixteenth century, it is rather surprising that the State only gave serious thought involving some sort of structured programme to interpreter training some ninety years after the Jesuits had been expelled from Macao.[432] It happened to be the first state-sponsored initiative of its kind in the Portuguese Empire,[433] but came as late as the mid-nineteenth century. Meanwhile, certain other European countries had moved ahead and long before created schools of Oriental languages, specifically Turkish; Arabic and also Persian, designed for training diplomatic interpreters: Venice in 1551; France in 1669, and Austria in 1754, whilst Spain had sent a large number of young men for language training at its diplomatic missions from the 1780's onwards.[434]

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430 Gomes Paiva, Maria Manuela "O 1º regimento do *Língua* da cidade de Macau", in Romana García, María Luisa [ed.] *II AIETI. Actas del II Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Ibérica de Estudios de Traducción e Interpretación. Madrid, 9-11 de febrero de 2005*. Madrid: AIETI, pp. 561-572. ISBN 84-8468-151-3. On-line version accessed at: http://www.aieti.eu/pubs/actas/II/AIETI_2_MMGP_Regimento.pdf on 12 July 2014.

431 cf. Lopes, David, *A Expansão da Língua Portuguesa no Oriente*, Editora Portucalense, 1936

432 cf. Aresta, António "Joaquim Afonso Gonçalves, Professor e Sinólogo", in Administração, n.° 48, vol. X Ⅲ, 2000-2.°, 677-683, SAFP Macao, pp.681-2

433 Naturally, we do not include Brazil in this statement.

434 cf. Caceres-Wursig, Ingrid "The *jeunes de langues* in the eighteenth century" in *Interpreting 14:2*

In order to bring this account full circle, we must end on a note concerning the language with which interpreting in the Discoveries began: Arabic. The Portuguese presence in Arabic-speaking North Africa stretched for three and a half centuries, from 1415 to 1769[435]. During this period, Portugal lost her linguistic advantage as the number of Arabic speakers among its citizens dwindled to a trickle. As other European nations stepped up training efforts in this area, in Portugal, the only study programme available for Arabic, albeit intermittently, was organised by the Franciscans. Their most illustrious teacher, the Syrian-born Brother João de Sousa, and student, Brother José António Moura, acted as official interpreters of Arabic on the delicate missions to Morocco, as Portugal attempted to strike a lasting peace in the late eighteenth century, appointments which covered several decades. The Franciscan training method included long stays in Morocco for perfecting their knowledge (Sousa himself had left Syria at a young age and also needed to familiarise himself with the Moroccan dialect), where they encountered hazardous living conditions. Even the Franciscans found it difficult to maintain the course owing to an absence of a critical mass of Arabic speakers (which also forced Sousa to work as an interpreter when already at an advanced age). And in addition, whilst the Secretary of State, Martinho de Melo e Castro, expressed his despair at this dire state of affairs, there was a dearth of political support for his bid to revive Arabic studies.[436]

Ultimately, the attitude to interpreter training and selection is symptomatic of the importance attached to the function by its different users during this long, defining period of Portuguese history. Linguistic mediation for political or diplomatic purposes necessarily ran a parallel yet differentiated course to religious interpreting, in view of the evangelisation of other peoples being one of the original goals of Portuguese exploration. The superior effort made by the religious orders to teach and learn the native languages of their interlocutors and their concern with the quality of linguistic

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Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 2012. This study provides an insight into the selection criteria and a comparison of the different teaching methods of the various European schools.

435 The Conquest of Ceuta to the withdrawal from Mazagan.

436 cf. Figanier, Joaquim *Frei João de Sousa, Mestre e Intérprete da Língua Arábica* Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra, 1949, p.78.

mediation contrasts entirely with the passivity of the state administration. This observation will provide the tone for the conclusions of this study.

Conclusions

This study of linguistic mediation during the Portuguese Discoveries is in itself a work of discovery, one which we embarked upon without a known destination, but rather just a map and a compass and the aim of gathering clues, in the form of direct and indirect testimonies along the way. Our impressions are obviously coloured by those who have left us accounts and references to the matter in hand. We have clearly observed that some such authors were naturally well-disposed towards or knowledgeable of interpreters and interpreting, whilst others were less so, and that this is true both of those who had direct contact with them, as users of linguistic mediation, and those who retold the experiences of others, but with the insight of having lived in the same historical and/or socio-geographic context. At the same time, our background as conference interpreter and trainer almost inevitably leads to an underlying comparison between twenty-first century and fifteenth to seventeenth century practice in these domains, which cannot be entirely impartial.

Furthermore, we have had to constantly bear in mind that by trying to write a history of linguistic mediation, we are already exposing ourselves to the risk of distorting the perception of this function, by placing it centre-stage, which we can conclude was not the general position that it held in the settings studied (although momentarily, it often became the focus of attention), nor does it correspond to the common level of recognition from the users of this process. In the same vein, the history of interpreting in the Portuguese Discoveries is scattered across thousands of pages of diaries; chronicles and correspondence, which the "archaeological" operation of sifting and assembling condenses enormously, disguising the scarce attention it receives in comparison to other activities. Naming interpreters and documenting contemporary references to them, whilst undoubtedly the starting point for writing their history, does not enable us to understand their work, nor assess its relevance and importance to the venture of the Portuguese Discoveries *per se*, and to the other actors involved. For this

very reason, it was absolutely vital to avoid the facile *a priori* that, were it not for interpreters, the Portuguese Discoveries would not have been possible and that a history of interpreting can merely reproduce the royal-chronicle style narrative of these voyages and sing the glories of all our predecessors in the "profession".

The Discoveries in Africa and Asia would have and in fact did go ahead, despite a substantial lack of linguistic mediators, because their availability or indeed competence was not a pre-condition considered by the promoters of these voyages, but it must be underscored that neither was it ignored altogether. Linguistic mediation was just one small facet of a very broad and complex operation. It was nothing more than a means to an end and an indirect one at that and this is why it has been treated in general histories of the Discoveries in the way that it has. Whilst interpreters' presence and active participation was, or with a great probability must have been (for often accounts do not even mention it), almost constant throughout the encounters between European and African and Asian cultures over this extended period and the extensive territory covered by Portuguese exploration and settlement, for many of the visitors to these continents, including those who wrote extensively of their experiences, it can be likened to a mere detail or even a necessary evil.

Consequently, not only do contemporary sources confine its position to that of a supporting role, but rarely do they sing the praises of interpreter performance or the effectiveness of linguistic mediation. Interpreters were not seen and certainly not treated as heroes nor was interpreting glorified, for this process was not considered as having a direct bearing on the objectives of the Discoveries. Instead, at best, we often find the mere expression of the other actors' relief at their appearance at the delicate moments of first contact and seemingly insurmountable communication barriers, epitomised by the effect of a few words of Spanish uttered on Gama's arrival in Calicut.

The appearances of our topic are hence both fleeting and irregular, in the sense that they comprise many rather unique observations, which as translation historians it is our job to de-construct in an attempt to find common characteristics, whilst at the same time, being ready to both build and then dismantle our hypotheses. Indeed, the asset of having a wealth of disparate references to interpreters in the surviving contemporary

documentation has almost inevitably lead us to detecting contradictions, for example, between self-assessment and user assessment of interpreter performance, or the level of trust deposited in an interpreter and the concomitant rewards and status, paradoxes which are impossible to ignore.

It is curious to note, but certainly not coincidental, that some of the richest sources for the history of interpretation were authored by people who were more sensitive to linguistic issues, in that they were or had had first-hand and particularly important experience of interpreters, or knew several languages. Cadamosto, for example, was of Italian origin and as he sailed on Portuguese ships, he had undoubtedly confronted a language barrier, albeit easily surmountable, at some point. Another sailor who did not overlook the issue of communication was Álvaro Velho, who at the end of his log of Vasco da Gama's voyage left us with a bilingual glossary of Portuguese and Konkani terms. Meanwhile, Jesuits frequently wrote about their tribulations with interpreters, for they themselves devoted a great deal of effort to language-learning, and among the Jesuits, perhaps the most prolific source that we have found on the issue of languages and interpreting was Father Henrique Henriques, himself an expert on Tamil and Telugu.

All the views expressed, however, are themselves not only subjective but also partly pre-determined. A certain lack of experience, but also other constraints lowered the expectations with regard to inter-cultural communication and affected the contribution that linguistic mediation could play in the earliest voyages of discovery. The strategic option to employ hard power, that is to say, military force, was rapidly replaced by instructions to use soft power, dialogue and partnership, in which verbal entente assumed a more relevant position. One cannot, however, overlook the fact that it was the change in primordial objective from conquest to commerce which was the trigger and not linguistic mediation which influenced the change in approach. Therefore, one can posit that the Portuguese Discoveries would have been different without linguistic mediation and perhaps not so successful, especially in the commercial and indeed religious spheres (despite the misgivings the clergy had in this regard, referred to below).

Our survey has basically examined the acts of interpreting and the position of interpreters n three main fields: on voyages; in the state administration and diplomacy, and for the religious orders. Both the practitioners and their practices varied greatly amongst and within these settings, and there is no doubt that the tasks of an interpreter evolved during the period under review. We began by closely examining what was understood by the term *lingoa* or *lingua* and have defended the notion that initially, certainly, it was not synonymous with the modern concept of *interpreter*, for the tasks demanded of this figure did not necessarily include the transposition of any message from one language to another, but rather supplying information to one of the parties about the other (people; land; resources) based on the *lingoa's* own knowledge. The concept developed in line with changes in the cultural meetings the Portuguese had, to subsequently include, but be far from circumscribed to, the oral translation of dialogues.

Even then, the modes of interpreting continued to differ considerably from our understanding of professional practice today, with dialogues often being asynchronous and remote (in the sense that the interlocutors did not meet in person) and the interpreter acting as messenger with a long list of instructions but also considerable leeway for pursuing the discussion on the sender's behalf; performing sight translation of written messages (a mode adopted precisely to reduce the interpreter's influence on the contents); assisting in written translations; gathering information, and negotiating terms of trade, with the linguistic mediator being given a substantive objective and then pursuing it as he best saw fit, on the basis of local knowledge and cultural intuition.

Many interpreters worked in restricted fields, specialising in dealing with the administrative matters of the Portuguese state, in commerce, or indeed as religious interpreters. Each field had its own list of requisite skills and personal characteristics, defined not only by the tasks involved but also by users' expectations. Whilst the required linguistic competence, in both the language they were interpreting from and the one they were interpreting into, was seemingly lower than is expected of today's interpreters, the smaller thematic sphere of activity enabled these linguistic mediators to be effective, even when their resources were limited.

Interpreting and interpreters were, thus balanced precariously on a number of fine

lines: they moved between hostile and belligerent cultures, who greatly mistrusted each other and as a result also the interpreters who drifted back and forth between them, moulding their allegiances in their own interest. Such suspicions had been deeply engrained in the Portuguese psyche ever since their struggle for independence and the identification of the *lingoa*-informant with a traitor.. The way in which the Portuguese sought to offset the power of this position was to suppress its bearers through subordinacy; servitude, and even punishment. This demeaning treatment by the Portuguese state fostered the latters' disenchantment and indeed their stratagems, culminating in a delicate and sometimes conflictual relationship between interpreter and paymaster. The Portuguese, however, could do little to avoid being in their hands, for such remote dialogues prevented any monitoring of their contacts with the other party, and the utter strangeness of the other languages and cultures left them entirely dependent on the mediator, for they could not intuitively grasp the other party's intentions.

In these situations, interpreters were an indispensable but uncomfortable bridge. The Portuguese (and indeed their interlocutors) did not expect them to be neutral, encouraging those who were not born Christian to convert, as the ultimate proof of their loyalty. Nevertheless, forced apostasy was a tool also used by Moslems, which many Portuguese accepted as a matter of survival. Identities were thus somewhat fluid, as names and faiths could be changed according to circumstances, which along with their bilingualism and biculturalism only heightened the ambiguity surrounding interpreters in India.

The Portuguese were certainly not alone in their suspicions: the Chinese shunned all foreigners and held interpreters, for speaking another language and being tainted by another culture, in the lowest esteem and no longer considered them to be authentic Chinese. Such considerations are still relevant today as we see interpreters in war zones considered as enemies and then persecuted by their own people.[437] On the other hand,

437 Much concern hs been raised in the press about the safety of interpreters who worked for the International forces (ISAF) in Afghanistan and who are now left in a dangerous situation following their withdrawal from the country.

we have also observed that Portuguese interpreters rose to prominent positions in foreign states, namely Japan; Siam; Burmese kingdoms, and Ceylon, suggesting one or more of the following: that the Portuguese mindset was neither unique nor universal; that greater value was attached to inter-cultural communication when conducted with non-Moslem, ergo not arch-enemy societies[438] and that consequently interpreters could enjoy greater recognition when not mediating between antagonistic parties. Frequently, the interpreters working for the foreign state were members of the clergy and despite the fact that they were working for lay authorities, their Christian morality bestowed on them a level of trustworthiness, which facilitated their acceptance as cultural and linguistic mediators by both parties.

On the other hand, something of a vicious circle was created by defective policy or planning: those who embarked on the ships bound for Africa and India and who were to serve as linguistic mediators were taken from the fringes of Portuguese society: outcasts such as Jews and New Christians; criminals and slaves captured on previous voyages. Frequently, the language skills held by the latter two groups fell well short of basic requirements and as marginals or simply from being inadequately compensated, they would obviously feel less patriotic duty to perform a service for the Crown. Hence, effective communication was not always achieved or (potential) interpreters deserted, particularly those who took up residence in the lands visited, the *lançados* and renegades who switched sides, phenomena witnessed from Guinea to India. It should have come as no surprise, therefore, that such interpreters were hard to trust.

Similarly, even after unsatisfactory experience with linguistic mediators, the Portuguese state appears to have taken little action to try and improve the situation, through appropriate selection and training programmes to offset the considerable shortfall in linguists they faced in terms of both quantity and quality. The only substantive attempts in this field were undertaken by the Jesuits, who invested heavily in their own language skills and in educating local boys, chosen mainly from the higher castes, in their seminaries, with a mixture of instruction in languages (reading and writing their mother tongue, and Portuguese and Latin) and theology, over a

438 None of the four places mentioned had Moslem rulers.

considerable period of time. Although the stronger students were channelled towards the priesthood and primarily the weaker ones towards becoming *topazes* (interpreters), it appears paradoxical that Jesuit correspondence frequently reveals the friars' discontent with interpreting as a means of communication *per se* and the performance in general of their linguistic aides. This can perhaps best be explained by the fact that, although objectively they had more formal training than any other group of interpreters, the Society of Jesus' expectations were much higher (as men of letters and accustomed to using complex language); the task more difficult, and the need for high-quality interpreting much greater, for the Jesuits' only "weapon" was their words.

Eventually, the development of various mixed-race communities proved to be one of the most effective ways of obtaining the language skills required for interpreting and gave the Portuguese language a clear advantage over those of other European rivals, who did not encourage miscegenation and nor did they engage in particular efforts to create their own linguists, either through language-learning or the formal training of interpreters. This resulted in the curious situation, whereby long after they had expelled the Portuguese state from certain footholds in Africa and Asia, they and certain South East Asian kingdoms continued to use the Portuguese interpreters, making them one of the most enduring human dimensions of the Portuguese age of discovery and essential to the unique status of Portuguese as a *lingua franca* in that part of the world. Without the support of an official presence or training programmes, however, these bilingual communities have gradually disappeared and their unique skills lost. In short, interpreting was indeed a relevant facet in this period of history, even if it was not fully recognised as such by many of its users, which had an adverse impact on its provision. And thus, just like the Discoveries themselves, Portuguese interpreting enjoyed a golden age during this process of globalisation and then gradually retracted over the following centuries.

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